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THEORY of RELIGION,

IN

Its absolute Internal State.



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In THREE PARTS.

I. Of the NATURE and END
of RELIGION, its Rise and
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Mind, and the Improvement and Reinforcement
which it receives from the
Revelation of the Gospel.

II. Of the EVIDENCES of Natural and Revealed RE- LIGION in general; with a Review of some of the most material Objections, which have been urged against them.

III. Of the Excellence and IMPORTANCE of TRUE RELIGION.

WITH

A CONCLUSION, in relation to the Persons, who disbelieve, or doubt of the Truth of Religion, and likewise to those who profess to be Believers of it.

By the Rev. JOHN ORR. M. A. ARCHDEACON of FERNS.

Quod ad nos Pertinet, et nescire malum est, agitamus.— Hon.

LONDON:

Printed for A. MILLAR, opposite Catherine-Street, in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXII.

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offering them to the Public, but rather with a View to fix semething shows after the polynomething shows for the solution of residual and the solution and and th

the Ends of his Profession, having been led to spend a great Part of his Life, in considering the Subjects, treated of in the following Pages, than which surely none can be of greater Importance to Men, resolved some Time ago, to bring the Thoughts, which, at different Times, had passed in his Mind in relation to them, as far as he could

a 3 recollect

recollect these Thoughts, with some, which he had committed to Writing, upon the same Points, into fome Order and Method; not with any fettled Intention at first, of offering them to the Public, but rather with a View to fix fomething like a System, or some general Scheme of Religion and Morality, more effectually in his own Mind. But when upon a Review of what he had written, he found, acd cording to the most impartial Judgment which he could form, the main Brinciples of the Scheme to be very firm and Itable, and the Reasoning which supported them, however plain and fimple, to be very fatisfactory and convincing; he Collogor

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he thought, that what was so say tissying to his own Mind; might likewise beins, in some Measure, to the Minds of others; and that if even but affinall Improvement, in the Knowledge of such important Truths and Principles, as are explained and inculcated in the following Treatise, could be effected in the Minds of any, by the Publication of it, it would be sufficient to justify the Author, in laying it before the World.

He is, however, very well aware, that the offering of new Books to the Public, upon a Topic so beaten, and exhausted in all its Parts, as that of Religion, will to many have the Appearance of Rashness and Presump-

Prefumption. But besides that the Author is not altogether of this Opi nion, for Reasons, which need not here be explained, he professes not to write for the Learned, or for those, who have thought deeply, and read much, upon the Subjects of Religion and Morality bat leaft, he pretendeth not to be able to convey any new Informations into the Minds of fuch. It will be enough, if with respect to them, he can revive any agreeable old Notions in their Minds, and give them a new Relift of some important Truths, which they have already embraced, and in the Belief of which they have been long established. But he thinks, that some Readers of Prefumpordinary

ordinary Capacities, may be found who will not be above the Want of fuch Infiruction, as this Book may afford to the min Andoas ait is for the Use of thefey that the Book is principally intended the Author hath lendeavoured to express his Meaning in the plainest and most intelligible Words, and as briefly and concilely, as the fetting the Subjects in a just and clear Light would admit of. He hath induftrioufly avoided all abstruce and intricate Speculations and Reafonings, for explaining and illustrating his main Argument, and hath depended, vfor these Purposes, on some obvious Facts, and plain Observations, and indeed, in a great Meafure, any

Feeling, and Experience is some Rays of that Divine Illumination, which is coeval with our Minds, which gradually breakethout, and diffuseth itself, as our Faculties open and enlarge, and which being strengthened and properly divined by the Revelation of the Gospel, leads us to the Knowledge of all the Branches of moral Piety and Goodness.

The Author is not sensible that he need make any Apology for his Manner of Writing: He hath every where delivered his real Sentiments, with Openness and Freedom, without designing to give Offence to any. If he hath any where used

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any Keenness of Expression, it is only in regard to one Writer, whose profligate Principles, eversive of all that can be deemed most facred and valuable by Men, and whose most indecent and outrageous Abuse of all the most respectable Characters, which have been known in the World, deserve much more severe Animadversions, than have yet been made upon them.

The Title of the Book confines us to the Consideration of Religion, in its internal State; from which, however, it is hoped, that the little that is said of the external Institutions of Christianity, will be thought no improper Deviation;

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as it is defigned only for enumerating more fully the Advantages of the Christian Religion, in promoting the Practice of Virtue, and is nothing like an Inquiry into the Reasons of outward Institutions in General, or a particular Account of the Nature and Uses even of the positive external Rites of the Gospel. To compleat the Scheme, which the Author had fometimes revolved in his Mind, another Tract fliould be added to this, upon the external and political State of Religion: But though he had made fome Progress in sketching out a general Plan of fuch a Work, yet as he foresaw that the Prosecution of it, would

would lead him into a wide Field of Controverly, where very wife and good Men would be found to differ greatly, he chose to drop the Design, and will not hereafter, probably, resume it.

There is one Thing more, which the Reader is to be advertised of; that the Author, having formerly published some Discourses, bearing an Affinity to some of the Subjects treated of in the following Book, he hath here adopted, not only several of the Sentiments, which he had before delivered, but in some sew Places, the Words in which these Sentiments were expressed, as he thought them to be

as fit for conveying his Meaning, as any others which he could devise: Which Freedom with what he had formerly written, he hopes will be easily pardoned, and that it will not give Offence, or Distaste to any.

Upon the whole, the Author fubmits this Performance, such as it is, to the Judgment of the sensible and candid Reader; expecting that he will overlook any smaller Defects and Errors, which may be found in it, if he approves of the main Design of it, and finds it to be executed, in any tolerable Manner, for doing Good: The Author indeed, hopes that it may be

PREFACE

an Introduction to a general Knowledge of the Principles of Religion and good Morals, to several Readers of inquisitive honest Minds; who, upon the Foundation here laid, may afterwards if they please, enter into larger and more particular Disquisitions, concerning such Matters, and fatisfy themselves fully as to all the Articles of Religion, and all the Measures of a right Conduct in Life: at least he pleaseth himself with thinking, that those who know him, will look upon this little Work, as the Effort of one, who meaneth well, who is fincere and in earnest in the Cause of Religion and Virtue,

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and whis is willing to contribute his Mite, athwards the Advancement of the digher Interest of Meri, both in this World, and in who, upon the Foundatixen ledte laid, may afterwards if they pleafe, enter into larger and more particular Disquisitions, concerning such Matters, and fatisfy themlelves fully as to all the Articles of Religion, and all the Measures of a right Conduct in Life: at least he pleafeth himfelf with thinking, that those who know him, will look upon this little Work, as the Effort of one, who meaneth well, who is fincere and in carnest in -Q-Tile of Religion and Virtue, and

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and for our acquiefcing gladly in a Belief of the Truth of it, when we find that it flands upon a clear and road I oundarion. And thele are

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INTRODUCTION.

THAT Religion is of the utmost Consequence both to Society in General, and to Individuals, is a Thing, that will be readily acknowledged by all Men of Resection, and of fair and candid Minds. If this should not be allowed to be a direct Proof of the Truth of Religion, it is at least a Reason, for examining it, with great Attention and Impartiality, for divesting ourselves of all Prejudices, in our Inquiries into the Nature and Evidences of it,

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and

and for our acquiescing gladly in a Belief of the Truth of it, when we find that it stands upon a clear and folid Foundation. And these are Things, which we should attend to, if we pretend even to a manly Exercise of our Understandings in the Bufiness of Religion: For as Credulity, or an implicit Belief of Religion, is altogether unbecoming, and unsuitable to the Dignity of our intellectual Nature; so likewise is a cavilling sceptical Humour, which makes us, either to neglect Evidence, or to evade it; which makes us, either in Reality, or in Appearance, to fluctuate and doubt, where there is no Occasion to hesitate; where there is Light enough to guide us, and to determine our Judgment, ac-cording to the established Rules of Reasoning, and of giving our Asfent.

fent. This is as plainly inconfift-ent with a free and generous Use of our Reason, as the blindest Credulity, or the most slavish Prepossession is. The Disposition, therefore, which prevaileth so much, to reject Religion, not in the Refult of any rational and honest Examination of its Merit and Pretenfions; but sometimes, upon the most idle Surmizes and plain Mistakes; at other Times, in consequence of gross Prevarication, and the most difingenuous Reasoning; often, in the Way of bold Jesting, of solemn Banter, and of smart and witty Sayings; is extremely mean and illiberal, which all Men, pretending to any Largeness and Freedom of Mind, should be quite ashamed of; and the Practice consequent to this Disposition, considering the infinite Importance of Religion, deserveth

deserveth a worse Character, being the very Conduct of Solomon's Madman, who scattereth Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, and Saith, am I not in Sport? It is to be hoped, indeed, that the greatest Part of those, who appear to be not quite satisfied with the Evidences of Religion, are not of this difingenuous and unhappy Temper; but that they still retain such a Sense of the native Excellence of Virtue, the End of all Religion, and have so much concern for the common Happiness of Men, as well as for their own, to the promoting of which, the Belief and Practice of Religion are fo manifestly and eminently subservient, as will prevent their prejudging Religion, or their condemning it, without giving it a fair Hearing; and as will dispose

^{*} Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

dispose them to inquire seriously into the Grounds of Religion, and to receive and embrace it, upon obtaining a rational Conviction of its Truth. Whoever want this Con-viction, and are follicitous to obtain it, can hardly fail to receive it, from their having recourse to some of the many excellent Vindications and Defences of Religion, which have been offered to the World, even in our own Days, which have fet the Truth both of natural, and revealed Religion, in fo clear and strong a Light, as will not be easily resisted by a sincerely inquisitive honest Mind. The enfuing Treatife is intended chiefly for the Benefit of Persons of plain Understandings, who may be willing to place their Scheme of Religion and Morals, on a rational Foundation, but who may have neither neither Leifure, nor Opportunity, to learch for that Foundation, in much more elaborate, and more valuable Works. This shall treat of Religion, under the following Heads.

I. Of the Nature and End of Religion, its Rife and Progress in the human Mind, and the Improvement and Reinforcement which it receives from the Revelation of the Gospel.

H. Of the Evidences of natural and revealed Religion in general; with a Review of some of the most material Objections, which have been urged against them.

III. Of the Excellence and Importance of true Religion.

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To which shall be added a Conclusion, containing some short, but useful Advices, in relation to those, who disbelieve, or doubt of the Truth of Religion; and likewise to the Persons, who profess to be Believers of it.

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INTRODUCTION.

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in the Constitution of our Nature he hath laid us under, or by Any Notices, which he hath other if conveyed to us of his

Of the Nature and End of Religion, the Rife and Progress of it in the human Mind, and the Improvement and Reinforcement which it receiveth from the Revelation of cuiring just and worthy Senti-legions of God. For as

The acquiring just Notions of the Perfections of God, the firth Branch of Religion.

The Nature of Religion.

fifteth in our acquiring just and worthy Sentiments concerning the Deity, and in our rendering to him an Homage, or Worship, that is suited to his Perfections. This seemeth to be the most precise and strict Notion of Religion, and at the same Time, sufficiently comprehensive of all that can be supposed to belong to it; as it taketh in, not only the

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Exercise

Exercise of the Affections of Piety, most properly so called, but a Performance of all the other Duties, which God hath required from us, either by that Law, which in the Constitution of our Nature he hath laid us under, or by any Notices, which he hath otherwise conveyed to us of his Will.

and I regrefs of it in the human Mind,

The acquiring just Notions of the Perfections of God, the first Branch of Religion.

The Mature of Religion.

According to this Account, the first Branch of Religion confifteth in our acquiring just and worthy Sentiments of the Nature and Perfections of God. upon the least attentive Survey of the Universe, we cannot but be struck with the Pre-eminence and Grandeur of him, who is the Creator and Preserver of it; it must immediately appear to be an Instance of the Respect, which we owe to the great Original of all Things, to acquaint ourselves, as far as we are able, with his real Nature and Excellencies. Besides, it is plain, that true and honourable Apprehensions Exercise

The Theory of Religion.

prehendions of him, are the only Foundation of a rational and acceptable Devotion towards him en But here, perhaps, fome may be ready to stop us short, immediately; by miging, that God is bid from us in the Majesty of his Nature; that iteris only Prefumption and Arrogance, if not Impiety and Profaneness, in fuch purblind Creatures as we are, whose Faculties enable them to go but a very short Way, in learching out the Nature of any Things, to pretend to have any clear and diffinct Notions of the Nature and Character of the Divillity. Thefe Objectors, may possibly allow us to entertain some Notion of a yague Principle at the Head of the Universe, endowed with Intelligence and Power; but to attempt to go farther, in aftertaining the Character of the Deity, or to fay, whether any, or what moral Attributes belong to him, which yet alone can render his Character interesting to us, they are peremptory, can be the Effect of Doctrine. nothing B 2

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nothing, but great Vanity, or groß Delufion. But now this Doctrine, notwithflanding the Boldness and Confidence with which it hath been advanced is destitute of all Foundation in TruthesiGod is, certainly incomprehenfible by rush We can understand, neither the Manner of his Existence, nor his Essence; not the full Extent of any of his Attributes But ftill fomething may be known of him; yery clearly and certainly The Works which he hath made, exhibit fuch amazing Scenes of Wildom, Power, Goodness, and other Excellencies, as cannot but strike every attentive Beholder a And if we are capable of framing true Notions of these Perfections and Excellencies in inferiour intelligent Boings, we may likewife form true and just; though inadequate Conceptions of them, in the supreme original Cause of all. So that the Experience of every Man of Reflection, may be to him, a fufficient Confutation of this Doctrine. nothing

God incomprehenfible, but not abfolutely unintelligible.

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Doctrine. Besides this, it is apparently of a very pernicious Tendency; for instead of doing Honour to God, by aggrandizing his Perfections, and being useful to Men, in teaching them Humility and Modesty, in their Way of thinking, and speaking concerning God, as hath been pretended, it is injurious both to the Deity, and to Mankind; as it rendereth God a Being, not only incomprehenfible, but absolutely unintelligible, and of Course subverteth all Foundation of Reverence and Honour towards him; and as it depriveth Men of the whole Utility of the Notion of a God, and the Belief of his Existence. It remaineth, therefore, that we may attain to fome Knowledge of the Deity, though vaftly disproportioned to the Sublimity, and Infinity of the Object. *

well explode, be Ather a Judgment, or

Tenet.

The Reader will find this Objection more fully and diffinelly answered below. 200 30 01 100 mion As from spill to thens. I deidly should't

The Existence

Now the first Thing in the Order of Nature, which is to be known of God, is that he existeth. The Existence of God, is a Point, in which Mankind have almost universally agreed; there having been no Nation known, fo rude and bafbarous, among whom, one might not have perceived some Traces of the Belief of a Divinity, and there having been but very few Individuals, in whom, one might not have found some Impression of him. Indeed the most universal Agreement of Men that can be supposed, in the Opinion of a divine Existence, is not the most direct Proof of its Truth: But so much may be justly inferred from this Agreement, that there is fomething in the human Mind, which, in a particular Manner, disposeth it to admit the Notion of a Deity; and that the Notion itself, feemeth not to be one of those groundless Fictions, which Length of Time must always explode, but rather a Judgment, or Tenet,

Tenet, founded in Nature, which Time establisheth and confirmeth U out mound which w

Of the Exiftence of the Exift-

I shall not enter on so large a Field, as a detail of the feveral Arguments for the Being of a God, or even of any confiderable Part of them, would lead us into: as indeed all Nature is full of the Deity, and almost every Appearance without us, and within us, is a Proof of his eternal Power and Godhead. Let it fuffice, first, to afcertain, in few Words, the Existence of an original, universal, independent, sovereign Mind, from which all other Things are derived; and then to delineate briefly, the chief Attributes and Perfections, which belong to this first, Independent, supreme Being, from whence we thall learn his true Character, and fee what those worthy Sentiments are, which are to be entertained by us concerning him, in acquiring which, the first Part of Piety, or Religion, conterly solund, herb brought all thefor

It sings into Belief, and disposed them in-

The Evidence of the Existence of God.

It is plain, that we cannot fix our Eyes upon the Universe with any Attention, without being immediately struck with a Sense of its Beauty and Magnificence; that we cannot feriously survey its various Parts, without discerning an admirable Order and Occonomy taking Place in them, without feeing their Connexions, Correspondencies, and mutual Relations, and a most wonderful Aptitude and Subordination of some to others of them; all of them together, composing one most elegant, august, and grand System: From hence, we are necessarily led to a Perception of deep Defign, and boundless Power, in the Constitution of the Universe, and are consequently forced to acknowledge an omnipotent Intelligence, who planned and reared the mighty Building who being unoriginate, or deriving his Existence from none, which must be the Case, as the contrary Supposition would be utterly absurd, hath brought all other Things into Being, and disposed them into the Order, in which they appear, and is still Supreme over all. This is a Conclusion, which the Mind as naturally arriweth at as it getteth the Idea of an able Architect, upon the Sight of a magnificent, and every-way commodious Edifice; or of an ingenious Artift, from the Contemplation of an highly finished Piece of Painting, or of Sculpture. And it is a Conclusion, which our Minds firmly acquiesce in as often as we attend to the Foundation, on which it standeth, notwithstanding any subtil Objections, which may be fometimes made use of to invalidate it. And thus we persuade ourselves of the Being of an original, independent, fovereign Cause of all Things, of the great Geometrician, as he hath been fometimes called, who always acteth in Number, Weight, and Measure, of that most confummately wife and skillful Artificer whose Works speak their own Excellence, and loudly proclaim their Author upon Principles, level to the common Perceptions nois

having Recourse to the abstracer Arguments, which have been commonly produced to establish this Point; though to all, who can thorough enter into these Arguments, they will probably appear to be irresistibly strong and conclusive.

Let us now proceed to confider, as briefly as we can, what are the principal Attributes and Perfections, and which will give us a just and interesting Idea of his Character, which belong to this Being, who is first and supreme in the Universe.

templation of an highly finished Piece of

Now as this Being is before all other Things, and above them, the Fountain of their Existence, and of all their Powers and Excellencies, we must necessarily conclude in general, that all possible Perfection is to be ascribed to him; as it would be quite absurd to suppose, that we or any other Creatures, could form a No-

tion of any Perfection, or Excellence, which is not most eminently in the Origin and Cause of all Things. priated to him, as to be abblutely, not

Among the Attributes and Perfections The incomof God, those that are termed incommunicable, because no other Beings, can, in Strictness and Propriety, partake of them, in any Degree, may be conveniently confidered a little by us, in the first Place; fuch as his necessary Existence, and Independency, his absolute Eternity, Immenfity, and Unity. These Attributes he posfesseth, as he is the original uncaused Being; in Consequence of which, we must conclude, that he must of necessity have always been; that he is full and compleat in himself, owing neither his Being, nor any Thing belonging to him, to the Will of another; that as he hath existed from Everlasting, so he must continue to Everlasting; that he filleth all Space, and is intimately present in every Part of Order: the

municable Perfections of God.

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God.

the Universe, which he hath made; and that he must be a singular Being, or have the Perfections of the Godhead fo appropriated to him, as to be absolutely, not only without a Superiour, but without an Equal, without any Rival in his divine Majesty, Dominion, and Glory, and Alice

Smidness and Propriety, partake of them,

The communicable Perfections of

God.

But though these Persections of the Deity always fill our Imaginations, and exceedingly raise our Ideas of his peerless Majesty, and unparalleled Greatness, yet his other Perfections, which are called communicable, because other Beings partake of them, in some low Degree, or at least have Powers, which bear some small Analogy to them, or some faint Resemblance of them, are still more engaging and interesting to us. Such as his Spirituality, and Life; his Intelligence, and Wisdom, and his Power; his Goodness, his Holiness, and his Justice. These shall be all confidered a little by us in their Order; Order; and from the Confideration of them together with the Relationsy which, in Confequence of them God frandeth in to Man, owe shall obtain a cleam view of his most excellent and perfect Character.

tions of its Parts; how much more mall The Spirituality of God, denoteth that he is intirely separated from Manter Sor Body, and all its Properties and Affections; that he is a pure Mind, and poffeffed of the highest Penfections which belong to that Kindlof: Beingsto This Notion of the Spirituality of the distinct Nature, anifeth from that Idea, which we must have of the boundless Perfection of the original independent Cause of all Things with which the Defects and Limitations to which he would necessarily be subject, if his Effence was corporeal, are utterly inconfishent: And is farther confirmed by all those Considerations, which prove that the Subject of Consciousness, Thought, and Action, in any Beings whatfoever, must riio)

The Spirituality of God.

The Life of God.

must be something different from Body; for if even the Degrees of Intelligence and Agency which are to be found in Men, are incompatible with Matter, resentially brute and inert, in all possible Modifications of its Parts; how much more must this be the Case, with Respect to the perfect Understanding, and the infinite Freedom and Activity of the Deity has who in the contract of the Deity has who in the contract of the Deity has who in the desired to the perfect to th

inat he is a pure Mind, and possessed of

The Life of God.

The Spirituality of God.

After the Spirituality of God, his bife may be properly confidered: By this we are to understand, his having the Principle of all Life, Strength, and Vigour, of all Activity and Perfection in his Nature; making him always to employ himself in the greatest Designs and Works, in every Part of the Universe; without being diable to the least Diminution, Decay, or Change; herein transcending vastly the Life of the most exalted Creatures, who hold their Life, only at the Pleasure of the Giver of it; whereas in God is the Foun-

tain

tain of perpetual Life; so that he is in the finiciest Sense immortal, and may be justly faid, Alone to have Immortality. To offer at any Proof of the Life of God, would be quite unnegellary; fince if he existeth at all, he must, most evidently, be, what he is sometimes emphatically said to be The is hardly poflible, but that ever bed grivil

on a flight Attention to them, must be The Intelligence of God, fignifieth his perfect Knowledge, or his clear, full, and immediate Intuition of all Things, which leaveth no Room for any Ignorance, nor Deception, and is not attended with the least Painteon Labour in him. And his to swot our Wildom importeth his differning and approving of the greatest and best Ends and his accomplishing them, by the most proper and effectual Means, Lo And that thefe Perfections belong to him, is clear from hence, that if Intelligence and Wildom were not effentially inherent in him, they could never have existed in any other Beings Forcess

The Intelligence and Wisdom of

Beings whatfoever; and is farther evident, upon the least serious Consideration of his Works; which bear the plainest Marks of infinite Knowledge and Understanding, and of the most consummate Design, Art, and Contrivance; the Instances of which, are fo numerous, and fo striking, that it is hardly possible, but that every one, even on a flight Attention to them, must be convinced that God is perfect in Knowledge, and be ready devoutly to fay, How manifold are thy Works, O Lord, in Wifdom hast thou made them all of on diseas! Deception, and is not attended with the

God.

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to mobile?

The Power of God, denoteth his infinite Activity or Energy, which can do all Things that are possible, and consident with his other Perfections. That this is an Attribute of God, is evident from the very Act of his bringing all Things into Being, and his constant Preservation of them, in the Order, in which he first fixed and established them; from the amazing Ecings

Forces.

Forces, which he hath impressed on the various Bodies of the Universe; and from that wonderful Life and Activity, with which he hath endowed the Spirits of intelligent Agents. Upon thefe Founda- decided and tions, we may, certainly, fay with truth, that great is our Lord, and great is bis Power arive sval bone averaged of chivabilit

liter of the light of the war war in the letter.

The Goodness of God, is that prin- The Goodciple in him, which determineth him to communicate Happiness to his Creatures. And that he is really a good Being, is clear, particularly, from that principle of Benevolence, which he hath implanted in us, as a Source of Happines, both to others, and to ourselves; and from all other Parts of our Constitution, which are evidently formed for the most gracious and beneficent Purposes that can be; and indeed from the whole Structure and Mechanism of the World, and all those general Laws, by which he supporteth and

ness of God.

and governeth it, which are most visibly calculated for the universal absolute Good of rational and perceptive Creatures.

which he bath endowed the Spirits of in-

The Holiness of God.

The Good nefs of God The Holiness of God, is that Perfection which maketh him necessarily to delight in the Excellence of his own Nature, and likewise to approve and love Virtue in all his rational Creatures; and which fetteth him at the greatest Distance from all mogal Evil, and maketh him to disapprove and dislike it in all other Agents. That he is pellefled of this Berfection, we must costlude not only from his being above all the Temptations, which could lead bint into any moral Depravity; but from that Degree of the Perfection which we find he hath communicated to ourselves Among feneral Powers, which the Author of jour Nature beth given to as boneuis that of perceiving Good and Evil, Right and Whongs and of approving and lowing the one and of condemning and hating the bus

the other : And when we reflect upon this Faculty, and confider its Use in our Con-Airestion, we cannot help concluding, that it is the trighelt, Pand most important one belonging to us; which is naturally and rightfully the Guide of Life in us, and brevale the principal Source of our Enpoyment, of Happiners. Now, as this Faculty is of to great Confequence in our Nature, to it feemeth to be an effectial Ingredient in the Perfection of the higher Orders of intelligent Beings, and even of the Pienand Supleme Hitelligence Himself. water inpedangent, of tome principle Aperior, but betterpondent to it, in Him, seris certain, that we can have no Felicity. ice of the termine him

The Justice of God, is that Property The Justice of of his Mature, which not only preventeth his purding the least Hardfilp upon his Creatures, or the giving them Cause to complain delivered. C 2

complain of the Severity of his Government, or Conduct towards them in any Instance; but which maketh him to treat them all with perfect Equity, and great Condescension; and to promote always the general Interest of the Universe, particularly by appointing to rational Agents, wife and good Laws, and by executing these Laws steadily and impartially, according as the Persons, to whom they are given, either observe, or transgress them. This Notion of the Justice of God, arifeth from the joint Conceptions of his Holiness, Goodness, Wisdom and Power: And if we be fatisfied, that thefe Perfections belong to him, we must rallow, that he is possessed of the Perfection of Justice also.

These are the Persections of God, which are principally to be attended to by us; of which, only a very brief Explanation, or Illustration, hath been here delivered,

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delivered, directing to the general Topicks of Argumentation on these Points; rather than displaying the Evidence at length, which supporteth and confirmeth them; which however every curious and inquisitive Man may easily find, in many Writers of high Merit and Reputation: And it is evident, that in consequence of the Deity's possessing these Perfections, he must exercise an universal Providence, and is necessarily to be considered, both as the Father and Governor of Mankind. To a Being endowed with the natural, and moral Powers and Excellencies, which belong to the Deity, the Care of the Universe cannot be a Matter of Indifference; as the Powers and Perfections of his Nature, not only enable and qualify him, but must dispose and determine him, to superintend all Things, and to direct and order them for the greatest general Good, and, so far as is consistent with that, for the highest Happiness of every reasonable C 3 ediral"

The Providence and moral Administration of God.

realonable and fentient Creature : Accordingly, we meet with the most visible Tokens of an universal Providence, every where taking place; in the Confervation of the numberless Parts of the immense Universe, in their original beautiful Frame and Order, and in conducting the feveral Systems of inanimate and vegetative Nature, and the various Tribes or Species of Animals, by stated general Laws, to the wifest and most beneficial Purposes. More particularly, the Perfections of God, exhibit him to us, as the Father of Men, both as they originally prompted him to produce fuch a Species of Brings, and to communicate a noble Nature to them, bearing fome low Image of his own Excellencies, and as they full difpose him to make an ample Provision for their compleat Happines; and likewife constitute him the Governor of Men, confidered as rational moral Agents, giving him a Right, and directing him, to prereasonable **fcribe**

scribe a Law to them, and to animadvert upon Conduct, and making him to approve, or disapprove of them, and to reward, or punish them, according as they perform their Duty or hegiett it. We may fee the Foundations, and the Begitttings of this moral and judicial Admirnistration of God, plainly enough in the present Order of Things. We may see fomewhat of a general Plan of it, in the Constitution and Course of Nature, even in this World," under which, great Support and Encouragement are given to the Inserted of Virtue, and good Men enjoy the purch and highest Happines, of which they have any Experience; and great Difficulties and Discouragements are thrown in the Ways of Vice, and the Wicket, as fuch, are exposed to many Evils and Calamities, and frequently to very exquisite Diffres and Tornient But the Confirmation, or final Accomplishthent of it, feemeth to be referred for a יי סנווכר

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future Scene, in which God will take to bim bis great Power, and will reign; where he will most illustriously display himself, as the holy, righteous, and almighty Governor of rational Agents, and will render particularly to Mankind, according to the Nature and Quality of their Works, and even according to the Measure or Degree of Good, or Evil, that is in them.

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And now, from a Review of these several Persections of God, and of the Relations, which in consequence of them, he beareth to Men, we may form the most persect Notions that we can attain to, of his most lovely Nature, and most excellent Character; contemplating him, as "the Being, who is original, independent, and supreme in the Universe, "who having all Persection in himself, and deriving his Existence from none, hath communicated Existence to all "other

Sum of the Character of God. "other Persons and Things, with all the Powers and Virtues, with which they are endowed; who hath always been, and will always continue to be, strictly eter"nal, immense, and alone possessed of underived divine Majesty and Glory; a Spirit ever living and active, most intelligent, wise, and powerful, most benevolent, holy, and just; who constantly inspecteth and directeth all Things, to the noblest and best Purposes; and interesteth himself particularly in the Affairs of Men, in the Character both of a gracious Father, and of a righteous Lord and Governor."

This is the Sum of those just and true Apprehensions, which the common Light of Nature and Reason, suggesteth concerning the Deity; very different from the Conceptions, which many Persons of a dark and gloomy, and of a timorous and suspicious Temper, and which others,

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of a vain and fantaftick Turn, are apt to emercan of hart . Who, agreeably to the Passions, which prevail chiefly in themfelves, either represent him, under the frightful Image of a Being, of irrefitible Power, and at the fame time, full of Wrath and Jealoufy, partial, stern, and inexorable; or paint him as an Idol, actuated by Pride, Ambition, and Oftentation of Power, delighting highly in the Applaules, ceremonious Attendances, and abject Submittions of poor Mortals; thus either transforming him, into an othnipotent evil Demon, or degrading him to a level with the weakest and lowest Class of Mankind. Whereas the true Idea of God, exhibiteth him to us, as perfect Light, in robon is no Darkness at all; as not only void of all Defects and Blemishes, but as possessed of the most transcendent and immutable Dignity and Excellence; who is, indeed, immenfely great, all-wife, and all-powerful, but lo likewife likewise persectly benign and good, holy and sighteous; who is not capable of the least Wrong, or Iniquity; whose Conduct is ever to be approved, as being wholly calculated for the greatest and most extensive Good of the Universe, and for promoting most effectually the Dignity and Happiness of the rational Creation. A submersequence provide first and the conduction of the rational Creation.

And by fixing this Idea of God, deep, and keeping it always firong and lively in our Minds, we shall discharge what the first branch of Religion, or Piety towards him, requireth from us.

Working of God, is the Exercite of those

The other effential Branch of Religion, lieth in our rendering to God, an Homage, or Worthip, that is fuited to his Perfections. And this confifteth, partly, in the Exercise of those Affections, which terminate in God himself, and naturally arise in us, upon a simple View of his most

The rendering to God, a Worship suited to his Perfections, the other Branch of Religion.

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most amiable Persections; and, partly, in a Performance of all the other Duties, which he hath required from us, either by that Law, which in the Constitution of our Nature, he hath laid us under, or by any Notices which he hath otherwise conveyed to us of his Will millioned not

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The Exercise of those Affections of which God is the fole Object, the first Thing comprehended in his Worship.

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The first Thing comprehended in the Worship of God, is the Exercise of those Affections, of which he is the fole Object, and which move and exert themselves. upon a fimple View of his most lovely Perfections; fuch as Reverence, Love, Gratitude, Joy, Truft, Dependance, and Refignation. And let no one think, that these Affections, and the natural Expressions of them, in Acts of Adoration, Praise, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, can ever be excusably wanting in any, who acknowledge a Deity, Some Persons, indeed, in the Schemes, or Systems, which they form of the Duties of Men, either altogether 4-Dom

gether omit, on make but little Account of the Affections, which are to be exercifed towards God kimfelf, laying the abief, for the whole Stress of Morality, on the focial Virtues, and those which tend to a Man's private Good, or Happiness. But it is hard to account for such a defective Scheme of Morals, upon any but atheistical Principles. For if God indeed exideth wif there is really a Being immenfely great and excellent, possessed of all Wildom, Power, Goodness, Purity, and Righteouthers, who made, preferveth, and governeth all Things; who is, particularly, the kind and indulgent Parent of the human Race, the holy and just Governor of moral Agents; if there be really fuch a Being, can it be doubted, whether the highest Reverence, Love Duty and Submiffion, be not due to him, from all whom he hath made capable of knowing his incomparable Worth, and of reflecting on the endearing Relations, fail in

ing and and an

in which he thandeth to them? Can those, who are often Aruck with high Admiration of the Virtues of free Mayo tals, help being more agreeably affected, with the Contemplation of original ful premie Beauty band Brietleine M front whence, our highest Graces and Perfect tions nare but for mish of faint Rays visited Emanations & Can the Man, who feeleth the more fincers and affectionate Respect and Gratique to his Parents upon Banks he void of the strongest Sentiments of Veneration, Love, and Submiffied to his Father in Heaven, who, we the Heaven are high above the Earth, bath Mercy, th Proportion, towards bis Children, with love and fear bim? Can the Perfons who revere an excellent Prince, an equitable and gracious Matter in this World; Who are inviolably banached militarie Rights while instrales and ambitious of feiving them faithfully ://can fash over fall there wethe Expedition of Respect and Homege, or fail ai

fail in the Allegiance and Duty which they owe to the universal King the Sceptre of subole Kingdom, is a Sceptre of Righteousness, who suleth his Subjects. with the most persect Equity. Clemensu and Goodness, and is more truly and eminently, than the greatest and best upon Earth, can possibly be, the Father, Protector, and Guardian of his Servants? In host, of there be a Foundation in our noiseido na Nature at all, for the Affections of Rever rence, Honour, Gratitude, and Love. towards the most respectable and eminent Characters among Men, towards great Benefactors, Friends, Parents, Patriots, Heroes, Legislators , the fame Affections, in the matural Course of their Operation tend to God himself, and must phis mately reft and terminate in him if we have but a full Permation of his Exist. ence, and a just and lively Scale of this Excellencies and Perfections of It is eberciara, junascauptable, how any, who worthe profess

answered.

profess to believe in God, and have any true Notions of his Character, can ever be indifferent about the Exercise of those Affections, which become them, towards him. I know, it hath been faid in defence of this Implety, that God wanteth not the Veneration, and Acknowledge ments of Mortals, and that be is far exalted above all our Bleffing and Praise. An Objection And if the Meaning of this be, that his Happinels dependeth not on us, or any of his Creatures, it is certainly true; yet, if there be a Difference in Nature, between Good and Evil, between right and wrong Affections, the one Sort must be pleasing to him, and the other disagreeable. And as the Affections of Piety, which arife in us, upon the Contemplation of his Perfections and Character, appear to be very amiable in themselves, indeed necessary Ingredients in a good Character, effential to our Dignity as reflecting moral Beings; it is plainly very profels worthy

worthy of God, and what might have been expected from his Purity and Goodness, that he should require the Exercise of these Affections from us, by his supreme Authority. It hath been farther Another Obfaid, that as Utility is the Ground of jection. the Merit of Virtue, or of our moral Qualities, one need be but little solicitous about the Affections which terminate in God; as they are of no Use to Mankind; whose Welfare dependeth upon the Exercise of the social Virtues, and the Practice of those Duties, which contribute to every one's own Ease and Prosperity. Now, inot to enter here, into an Inquiry whether Utility is the only Ground of the Merit of Virtue, or the only Foundation of our Approbation of moral Qualities, it is allowed, that the focial Virtues of Justice and Humanity, and likewife Temperance, Industry, and the like, are of very great Worth and Importance : without which, as there would D lovely

jection.

would be no Order and Happiness among Men, so neither could there be any true Religion in them. But if any one will fay, that these are the only moral Qua do red littles of real Value and Confequence to Mankind, while a Respect to God, and the Love and Fear of him, can have no Influence on their Happines, he must certainly, appear to be in a great Mi Rake U Port first it cannot but be clear to every one, who hath experienced the Force of these Affections, that they are most plentiful and constant Springs of loy and Confolation to him, in all Cie cumflances and Conditions of Life : And befide this, it is plain, that they have a great Efficacy for engaging Men to the Practice even of those Duties, which they owe to the Public, and to themselves and are indeed the best Security for the Acady, uniform; and vigorous Performance of them. For though the focial and private Virtues of Men, are very Mucw lovely

lovely in their own Nature, and of the greated Confequence to the good Order of the World, and to the true Enjoyment of Life; and though we are flaturally determined to approve and practice them, antecedently to the Confideration of their being required by the supreme Lawgiver, who both can, and will reward, or punish us, according to our Obedience, or Disobedience; lyer, if we judge from common Oblervation and Experience, the greatest Part of Men, are not very deeply implefied with the native Beauty of thefe Virtues, not is their natural Attachment do bride A to them firing enough, to keep them firm and stedfast in the Practice of them, unless it be supported and strengthned by the Principles of Religion, a Belief of the Existence of God, and a lively Sente of his Perfections, and rightful Authority over them, and of their Accountableness to him, as their Governor and Judge, for every Part of their Conversation in the D 2

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World. These Principles well laid in the Mind, and being warm and vigorous in it, will indeed add fuch Force to the focial Propensions of Men, and to their natural Approbation and love of Virtue, as will render them zealous, uniform, and steady in the Performance of the Duties, which they owe both to Society, and to themselves: Whereas without the Affistance of these Principles, the generality of the World, will ever fall far short, of what is justly expected, and required from them, in almost every Branch of their Duty. It hath been urged farther, in the last Place, that the Affections, which Men pretend to exercise towards God, almost always run into Enthusiasm, or Superstition, Things, so far from being useful, that they have a very pernicious Effect on the Conduct of Life. But, furely, if there be a Foundation in Nature, for the Exercise of these Affections; if they are in themselves, lovely and becoming World. O

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coming Qualities, and when duly exer cifed, of great Importance, mot only to the Happiness of particular Perfors, but to the Welfare of the Public has and worthy of a Man of Reflection, to argue against the Exercise of these assections, from the Abute of themyouthe enly Thing becoming him; in this Cale, is to prevent as far as he can, the Errors and Abutes, which fome ale apperto fall into in the Exercise of their Affections to wards God; land to bring the all to exert those Affections according to their Rank and Order dir The System of our inward Principles; which will both lestablish their Minds in Tranquillity and Peace, and have a good Effect upon their whole Behaviour.

The Constationalis that we care not, upon any Pretences whatfoever to think of excusing countelves from the Cultivas action of the other tion of a becoming Temper cowards the

A Performance of all the other Duties required by Part of his Worldip.

Deity:

Deity; but that on the contrary, we are by all Means in our Power, particularly by ferious and attentive Meditations on him, and by frequently repeated Acts of inward Devotion, to enliven, improve, and firengthen, all those Affections, which erife and move in us, on the Confideration of his most amieble Nature, and the interesting Relations, which he beareth to us; that we should ever have a deep Impreffion of his Goodness and Greatness, and be filled with all politible. Veneration Love Gratitude and Refignation to wards him to This is a Tribute of Acknowledgment and Monour, indifferent ably due to the Glories of his Nature, and to the Excellence and Bersection of his Character. Behaviour.

A Performance of all the other Duties required by God, the other Part of his Worship.

to The other Patt of the Liousage, which the two two God, confident in a Perform and of all the other Duties, which he bath required from use either by the Law

Deity;

of our Nature, or by any Notices, which he hath otherwile conveyed to us of his Will. It is plain, that God hath laid us under a Law, in the very Constitution of our Beings, as he hath implanted in us, the Power of natural Conference, which giveth us a Sanfe of Good, or Evil, of Excellence, or Baseness, of Worth, or Ill-defert, in certain Actions of Mankind, and of other rational Agents; and which, at the same time that it pointeth out these different Objects to us, obligeth us to adhere to one Sort of them, and to avoid the other; authorizatively and determinately pronouncing the Things, which it approveth as good excellent, and worthy to be right, meet, fit to be done, and to be our Duty; and there which it disapproveth as evil, base, and ill-deferving, to be avrong, unmeet, and not to be done. That we really have a Power, which exerteth itself in this Manner, wis Thing, of which every good Man will fron be eni

be extremely fentible, and of which all Men may be convinced by Reflection and Observation: And that we are capable of acting, according to its Directions, is likewife a Matter of our inward Confeioufnels and Experience. The Dictates of this Faculty, which feem to be as uniform, as the Dictates of any other Sense, or Power in us, constitute that first and original Law, by which Mankind are bound to their Duty, which is of invariable and unalterable Obligation, and cannot be transgressed by us, in any great Inflances, without our feeling an inward Uncaliness and Remorfe, Now, this Law of our Nature, being evidently the Law of the Author of our Nature a Performance of all the Duties, which it requireth, and an abstaining from all the Offences, which it prohibiteth, must necessarily be a Part of that Homage, which we owe to the Deity; fince without our performing these Duties, and our avoiding

Morality.

ing these Offences, we must appear to be, not only greatly defective in our Respect and Veneration towards God, but chargeable with the highest Contumacy to him, and a plain and direct Rebellion against him. And as this Faculty, by which, we are a Law to ourfelves, in general requireth, hot only the Exercise of Piety towards God, which hath been already confidered, but all Acts of Justice and Good-will to Mankind, and to every Individual, with whom we have any Intercourle; and strictly prohibiteth not only Profanenels and Impiety, but all inpurious malevolent Practices, in Regard both to the Public, and to particular Perfone; as it likewife requireth from us a morning las eareful Cultivation of the higher Powers and Affections of our Nature, which lay the Foundation of our diftinguishing Glory and Happinels, and forbiddeth an undue Indulgence of our inferior Appefites and Passions, which, if grown headthen. ftrong

firong and unruly, would certainly degrade and enflave us, and render us utterly miserable; we must, if we would compleat that Worthip, which we owe to God, be, not only devoted to him, and full of all good Affections towards him, but altogether just, publickly-spirited, honest, friendly, and benevolent in the whole Commerce of Life; and despiting all low Attainments and Enjoyments, must ever aspire to the highest Improvements that we can make in Wildom, Knowledge, and moral Excellence, and to the folid and fublime Happiness, which proceedeth from thence. There are forme, The Mistake however, who here fall into a great Mistake; who are for making a Separation between Religion and Morality, and we the one, for a Pretence of neglecting and deftroying the other; who, if they can but perform what they call their Duty to God, imagine there can be no great Crime, or Harm in it, if they now and then, firong

of feparating Religion from Morality.

then, fall short in the Respects that are due to Mankind; and who, with an Appearance of great Devotion, and Zeal for the Divine Honour, contradict and violate the plainest Obligations of Justice and Humanity; many Instances of which Behaviour, occur, not only in the Cafe of open Persecution upon the Account of Religion, but in the more common and private Dealings of Mankind, with one another. This mistaken Notion, is the Reverse of the Error, which making no Account of the Exercises of Piety, layeth the whole Streff of Morality, on the focial Virtues, and the private Duties of Men; the exil Confequences and Abfurdity of which we have already feen. The Mistake, which we are now considering which excludeth Morality from being 9 Part of Religion, and resolveth the whole Duty of Men, into Acts of high Contemplation; and of a warm rapturous Devotion, and an affiduous Attendance

on the external Forms and Duties of divine Worthip, is at least equally pernicious with that other Error; as it necesfarily produceth, when Men act according to it, a most deplorable Devastation in the Heart, and introduceth the greatest Confution and Milchief into the Affairs of the World; and is likewife equally abfurd with it; as it must indeed appear to be nothing, but a vain enthufiaftical Concent, to any, who confidereth, that there can be no true Piety towards God, which is not productive of Righteoulness and Charity to Men, and of Temperance and good Order, in the Government of our private Defires and Pations; that the Dispositions of Reverence, Love, and Gratitude, which we exercise towards God, must naturally direct and lead us, to the Practice of all focial and moral Virtues; which, we cannot but know, if we reflect at all, to be indiffentably required by the great original Law, which CD he he hath prescribed to us, and to be intirely agreeable to the wife and good Defigns of his Creation, and Administration of the Affairs of Mankind. And this feemeth to be one Reason, why the Love of God, the Sum of all the good Affections, which we are to exercise towards him, is so strictly enjoined, as we find it to be, and so great Stress is laid upon it in Religion; because, besides its being a most amiable Affection, and most becoming our Nature, and its tending greatly to our Perfection and Happiness, it hath a most powerful Influence in determining us, to promote the Interest of Society, and of Mankind, and to confult the true Dignity and Glory of our own Nature, by a strict Observance of the Rules of Equity and Charity, and of Sobriety and Moderation, in every Part of our Conduct; which Virtues, when practifed by us, from Principles of Respect and Love to God, in Obedience to his Will, onefelore

Will, and in Imitation of his Example, fo far as it can be followed by us, are as truly and properly a Part of his Worthip, as the Exercise of any Affections, of which he is the ultimate and fole Object. This is evident, not only from the Notion which Reason giveth us of the Worthip of God, but also from the Accounts and Descriptions of it, which have been delivered by Writers of the highest Authority: One of whom, returneth this Answer, to an Inquiry concerning the true and acceptable Method of worthiping the Deity; He bath shewed, O Man, what is Good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk bumbly with thy God. And another of them, giveth this Description of pure Religion, and the true Worship of the Father and Lord of all; Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep ourselves

ourfelves unfpotted from the World MIn vain, therefore, do any pretend to wor thip God) while whey knowingly omit their Duty to Men: In vain is Religion pleaded in Prejudice to Morality, which is fo far from being subverted by the Principles of Piety, that thefe, John the contrary, are a great Support and Security to it, and never obtain their Ends till they have made us thomoughly just and honest, meek and peaceable, in friendly and charitable in our whole Convertation; and till they have raifed us above this World, and given us a Relift for more noble Objects, and made us principally intent on attaining to the highest Dignity and Perfection of our Nature. Let us, therefore, always confider our pious Dispositions towards God, as intended for influencing and firengthning all the other honest and generous Principles in our Minds, and freely allow thempitoi produce in us, all the Fruits

The End Rollgion.

of Mercy and Peace, and of universal Righteousness and Purity. Thus shall we truly honour and worship God, and offer him the Sacrifices, with which he is well-pleased.

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And thus we have an Account of the Nature of Religion; as it confifteth in the Acquisition of just and worthy Sentiments concerning the Deity, and in rendering him a Worship that is suited to his Nature and Persections.

tion; and till they have railed us above

The End of Religion. From what hath been said on the Nature of Religion, it will be easy to discern what the great Aim, or End of it is; to purify and ennoble our Nature, and to exalt us to a State of the highest Excellence and Felicity. For, surely, that Knowledge of the Deity, which Religion conveyeth to us; those Contemplations on his most amiable Nature, and perfect Character, to which it inureth

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us; and that Habit of Devotion and Obedience to him, which it produceth in us, have the plainest and most direct Tendency, to free us from all Abuse of our natural Powers, and from every Thing that is base and vile, and even from whatever is mean, low, and illiberal; and on the contrary, to open and enlarge, to Arengthen and refine all our Faculties and Affections, to inspire us with the most noble Sentiments, to work and inlay into the Temper and Complection of our Souls, all lovely and generous Qualities; and to engage us in a Course of all the most worthy and honourable, and the most pleasing and delightful Actions. So that the Improvement of our Nature in moral Perfection. and in consequence of that, the bringing us to the Enjoyment of the purest and most sublime Happiness, is evidently the Defign of Religion. This must, indeed, neceffarily, be the End of Religion, or of hannon

any Worship, or Service, which God can be supposed, to require at the Hands of Men. For, as God, in our first Formation, hath endowed us, with a most lively Sense and Approbation of moral Goodness, or Excellence; and pointed it out to us, as the great Object of our Purfuit, which we must esteem and love above all other Things; and hath likewife made us capable of perceiving and relishing that most exquisite Pleasure, which arifeth from the Consciousness of our pollefling it, in a high Degree, and determined us to feek this Pleafure as our chief Good; if any Thing bearing the Name of Religion, should aim at fomething different from, or at something more than the Purification, and moral Improvement of our Nature, it would not correspond with our original Confitution: Religion and Nature, according to this Scheme, would not be of a Piece; and therefore could hardly be thought to proceed AUA

proceed from the fame Author. But the Case is manifestly otherwise: Religion coincideth perfectly with the Plan of Nature, and urgeth us principally to the Study and Practice of those very Things, which the original Sentiments of our Minds approve and recommend to us, as being the Foundation of our highest Dignity and Happiness. And if it should be faid, that beside the Reformation of Men, or the improving them in all morally good Qualities, there are fome other Things intended by Religion, even as it appeareth in its most perfect Form in the Gospel; such as the instructing us, in certain Doctrines, not discoverable by Reason, and the engaging us to some peculiar Forms of external Religion; I answer, that whatever of this Sort is proposed by any true Religion, must be always in Subordination to the establishing the Practice of all Goodness and Virtue among Men, which is particularly the E 2

the great and ultimate End of the Christian Institution, to which every other Thing in it, is made subservient. And, therefore, we find, that both the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the positive external Rites of it, have all a practical View and Tendency; and that if the Belief of its Doctrines, and the Use of its Rites, be not the Means of influencing us, to an universally pure and good Life, they cannot be of the least Significancy. Indeed a wife Man, could hardly, by any Means, persuade himself of the Truth and divine Original of any Institution of Religion, the whole or the principal Intention of which, was only to gain our Affent to some speculative Notions, or to engage us to the Observance of some outward Rites; but whatever Pretences were made use of to support its Authority, he would be very apt to consider it, only as the Effect of Enthulialm, or Impolture.

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I shall proceed now, to consider the The Rife and Rife and Progress of Religion in the human Mind, and how far the Powers of our Nature can carry us, in investigating the Principles, and in forming a perfect Scheme, or System of it. As Mankind are born into the World, in a State, in which, for a confiderable Time, they have no Use of their intellectual Faculties, and are flowly and gradually advancing to the mature Exercise of their reflecting and readning Powers, during which Period, they get their original Notices of most of those Things, which afterwards become the Objects of their ferious Attention and Inquiry; it is not to be supposed, that the first Notions, which they receive of Religion, should be derived from any Principles of Reason. In the greatest Part of Men, at least, they are undoubtedly owing to such instruction and Education as they have had, and to certain Traditions, with which they novo ..

Progress of Religion, in the Mind.

The Rife and Progress of

Religious in the Mind

were acquainted: And as these are, atbest, very uncertain and fallible, and for the most Part, very blind and erroneous Guides, they probably lead those, who are under their Direction, much more frequently into Absurdities and Mistakes than into true and just Sentiments, concerning the Deity, and that Homage, or, Service, which is due to him, from Mankind. But yet po Argument can be drawn from hence against our afferting. that the Knowledge of Religion is natural to the Mind; , because, though no explicit, or actual Knowledge of it, is born with us, yet, we certainly have Powers originally implanted in us, which exerting themselves, according to the Intention and Order of Nature, must neceffarily lead us, to an Acknowledgment of the Deity, and of his feveral Attributes; and likewife to a Discovery of the true and acceptable Methods of honouring and serving him: And which,

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even when most neglected and uncultivated, spontaneously furnish, at some Time or other, the greatest Part of Men, with some true Sentiments in these Points. And here, for proceeding more diffinctly in this Inquiry, concerning the Rife and Progress of Religion in the Minds of Men, it may be proper to diffinguish between the Persons, who make a becoming and tight Use of their natural Powers, in fearching into Religion, and those, who are altogether negligent and careless in this Matter, who never reason, or think at all, on any Points of Religion, but are always ready to embrace, and to hold any Opinions in Relation to them, however monftrous, ablurd and foolish, swhich the Chance of Education, or vain and ill-grounded Tradition, or the Bent and Biass of their own Tempers, obtrude ons then and They former will become quickly acquainted with the first Principles of Religion, and in Time, make a great anoun

great Progress in acquiring a comprehenfive Knowledge of it; whereas the latter, whatever confused, incoherent, and incompleat Notions they may have of it, can have no just, clear, and confishent Theory of it at all. The Thing therefore, which is chiefly to be regarded, in an Inquiry into the Beginnings and gradual Advances of Religion in the human Mind, is, how it ariseth in the Minds of those, who diligently and impartially exert their Powers, in the Investigation and Search of it, and what Length they can go, in forming a compleat Scheme of its After we have gone through this Inquiry a few Reflections shall be added on the Rife and Progress of false Religion, which hath fo commonly prevailed in the and ill-grounded Tradition, or thirow

Man, arrived at a Maturity of Understanding and Reflection, and of an inge-

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nuous and honest Disposition of Mind, will be willing to inquire into the Foundation of those Opinions, which may have been inculcated on him, by the common Traditions of his Country, Course of his own particular Education, concerning the Deity and his Attributes, his Providence and Government of the World; and into the Nature of that Respect, or Worship, which is due to God from his intelligent Creatures. His Sense of the Importance of these Points, and of the Necessity of his forming some rational and confiftent Scheme of them, for free ing himself from the Dread of unknown Powers interpoling in the Affairs of Men. and for establishing his Mind in a State of Ease and Tranquillity; together with the Curiofity, which he must almost unavoidably feel, to search into the Causes of the grand and beautiful Appearances of the Universe, it may be justly thought, will excite and determine him to this Inquiry. Inquiry. And if a Man of competent natural Abilities, who hath a fincere Defire to find out the Truth, especially, if he hath the Advantage even but of a moderate Share of that Learning, or Knowledge of Nature, which is now fo common in the World, or of the Conversation of those, who are already well instructed in Religion, fetteth about this Inquiry, he will undoubtedly, eafily fatisfy himfelf, as to the Existence of an original, independent, creating, governing Mind, trace the Attributes and Perfections of his Nature and the Relations which he beareth to Men; and likewise see what that Veneration and Honour, and that Gratitude, Submillion, and Duty are, which are due immediately to him, from Mankind, All their Things he will come to know, by some such Process of Reasoning, as hath been already used for explaining and establishing them; which he will be naturally led into, in the Train of his own Reflections Inquiry,

Reflections upon this Subject; or by the Light which may be communicated to him, from others; and which, at the fame Time that it will be found, as it is prefumed, to carry Conviction in it, by the ablest Inquirers, hath nothing too abstruse, or difficult in it, to a Person, even but of an ordinary Capacity, who is candid and impartial, and in Earnost in fearching into a Matter, of the utmost Consequence to him. Such a Person, will also readily attain to the Knowledge of all the other effential Branches of Religion; I mean, the feveral Virtues, which are to be practifed by Men, in their focial and relative Capacities, and those which terminate in themselves, and tend to the highest Dignity and Happiness of their Nature; which being, as we have already feep, indifpenfably required by the Law of God, must necessarily make a Part of that Service, which he exacteth at the Hands of Mana, It would be tedious, moral

dious, as well as unnecessary, to enter here into a particular Detail of these Virtues, to define their Nature, and to fettle their precise Boundaries. It may fuffice to observe, that there can be nothing requifite to the Knowledge of them, furpaffing the Comprehension of a Man, of a plain unprejudiced Understanding, who is really willing, and at Pains, to become acquainted with them. It may, indeed, be very well supposed, that he will find less Difficulty, in arriving at the Knowledge of these Virtues, than in convincing himself of the Truth of many other Points of Religion; as he is cerrainly born with Faculties, which, as they unfold and exert themselves, will give him a Perception of the Excellence and Worth of the feveral Branches of moral Virtue; and as he had forme generous Propentions of Soul, which lead him directly to the Practice of them. The Investigation of the whole System of dious moral

moral Virtue, must, undoubtedly, come within the Compass of the Powers of Nature, even in the common Rank of Men: For as the Practice of all Virtue is a Matter of universal Concernment, the Knowledge of it, must, of Course, be attainable by all, who fincerely defire and feek it. Accordingly, we find, that the main Branches of Morality, which are really comprehensive of all the other Parts of it, have been always held in the highest Estimation, by the People of all Nations, by the lowest and meanest of them, as well as by those of more fagacious and enlarged Minds; and that even the Men, who have allowed themselves to swerve from the Rules of Virtue in their Conduct, have been, for the most Part, very true to the Cause of it in Speculation; while Vice, in the general, hath been very uniformly disapproved and condemned by Mankind. Some, I know, contend, that there are certain Virtues,

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of an evangelical Perfection, as they fometimes speak, to be practised by Men, which are not to be found in the Volume, or System of Nature, and which are known only by a supernatural Light, or the Means of some extraordinary Difcovery; intending hereby to do a remarkable Honour to the Christian Institution. But the Fact, really, is not as this Notion representeth it; there being nothing even in the most sublime and heroical of the Christian Virtues, the Forgiveness of the greatest Injuries, the fincerest Love of Enemies, the highest Acts of Self-denial, fuch as parting with all the Advantages of the World, and even with Life itself, in Defence of a good Cause, and for the keeping of a good Conscience, which doth not flow from fome Principles in our Constitution, and which may not be shewn, to have a stable Foundation in it; and which, therefore, may not be found, both in the

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the Speculations and Practice of feveral of the ancient Heathens. Some proud, fullen and ill-natured Doctors, might have laid it down as a Maxim, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, but bate thine Enemy : But this was not the Docume, which took Place from the Beginning nor was it put in Practice, in all Cases, even among the Jews; in whole History, notwithstanding the morose, froward, and felfish Discipline, inculcated by their public Guides and Teachers, we meet with Infrances of the more noble and generous Charity and Forgiveness Befides, what Honour would it really reflect on Christianity, to have it faid, that forme of its highest and most important Duties, had no antecedent Foundation in Nature and Reafon and that our whole Obligation to practife them, depended on its politive Injunctions? Is it not much more evidently for the Glory and Advantage of this excellent Inflitution.

Rules, perfectly correspond with the original Principles of our Nature; and that from the native Sense of our Minds, we have an Idea of the Dignity and Excellence of the several Virtues which it requireth, and that from the generous Instincts of our Hearts, we are impelled and urged to the Practice of them?

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The Progress of Religion in the Mind.

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But to go on, in confidering, how far a Man making a proper Use of his natural Powers and Advantages, may proceed, in attaining to a comprehensive Knowledge of Religion, we must conclude, that besides his coming to the Knowledge of those speculative Principles, in relation to the Deity, and the essential Difference between the Actions, morally good, and those, which are morally evil, which lie at the Foundation of Religion; and his understanding the Nature of the several Duties, or Virtues, which are required

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by the Laws of Religion, which raise the Superstructure of it; he may likewise clearly discern what the Intention, or Defign of Religion is: That this can be no other, than that which hath been before affigned, the Improvement of our Nature in moral Excellence and Perfection; as he must see, that all the Doctrines and Laws of Religion, are most evidently calculated, to engage us to the Practice of those amiable and divine Virtues, from the Culture and Exercise of which, our supreme Dignity and Happinels, according to any rational Notions, that we can form of them, refult. 10 has caller, that he can never approve, but in

And we must, moreover, conclude, that a Man in the due Exercise of his natural Faculties, and by availing himself of those Helps, which he may have from the Conversation, or Instruction of others, may find out, at least in some Measure, the Sanctions of Religion; and

The Obligations of Religion. fee, that he is under some very strict Obligations, and that he hath some very powerful Motives to observe and obey the Laws of Religion.

The first Obligation of Religion arising from the Dictates of Conscience.

Let asked door delder fait and hides the One of these Obligations he may find, by attending to the Dictates of his Conscience, which at once instruct him in his Duty, and oblige him to perform it; which at the same Time, that they give him the Notices of moral Good and Evil. Virtue and Vice, impress him with such a lively intimate Conviction and feeling of the Excellence and Worth of the one, and of the Baseness and Ill-desert of the other, that he can never approve, but on the contrary, must necessarily condemn himself, and be full of Uncasines, if he doth not practife the one, and avoid the other. From which State of confcious Guilt, nothing can deliver him, but Repentance, and a Return to his Duty. These are Facts, which may be sufficiently plain, 3351

Ar Objection

plain, from the Experience and Observation of every Man, Now this Sense of Virtue and Vice, which may be juftly faid to be born with us, as it necessarily ariseth upon the first Opening of our effential and distinguishing Faculties, and which is so interwoven in our Frame and Make, that our Beings must be extinguished before it can be totally loft, is the first, and great Source of all moral Obligation; which bindeth Men firmly and univerfally to their Duty; which formetimes controuleth and restraineth even the most profligate and abandoned, and preventeth their running the utmost Lengths in Wickedness, to which Passions altogether loofe and ungoverned might carry them, and in some Instances, prompteth them, to a good and worthy Behaviour; and which in general, hath always the chief Influence, in producing that Degree of Virtue and Goodness, which is to be found among Mankind. F 2 But,

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But, some, it is not improbable, may here object, that no great Stress can be laid on the Informations of Conscience, either as to the Matter of our Duty, or as to the Obligations which we are under to perform it; forasmuch as the Dictates of this Power, are by no Means, precise and uniform; but indeed to loofe and indeterminate, as to allow of a great Diversity of moral Sentiments among Men; to fuffer some, to regard certain Actions, at least as innocent, or to approve of them, as worthy and bonourable, which others quite disesteem, and perhaps detest and abhor: So that there may be Reason, as these Objectors say, to resolve the Judgment and Opinions of Men, as to the feveral Points of Morality, and likewise their Sense of the Obligation; which they are under to adhere to them, and to avoid the contrary, not for much into the Suggestions of any Principle essential to the human Constitution, as into the 200

the different Institutions, Customs, and Modes of Education in the leveral Countries, and Ages of the World Now it must be acknowledged, that the Principle of Confeience in Men, on the moral Faculty, with which we are maturally endowed, presenteth to us, only the general Forms, or Species, under which our own Affections and Actions, and those of other dational Agents, are approved, or difapproved by us, as morally Good, or Evil, Right, ron Wrong; without describing particularly the Nature, of the feveral Virtues, and Vices, or pointing out our Duty to us, in every Cafe, precifely and minutely. And by this Means it cometh to pass, that many Persons of inattentive Minds and irregular Imaginations, rand that others prejudiced in Favour of certain Vices, and that those likewise, who are under the Influence of violently) hiperflitious, or enthuliaftic Notions, have Scope given to them, formetimes to miffake their 700 Duty,

Duty, or to explain it away 10 throw artificial Gloffes or falle Colonings over their Actions, Wto call, in feveral Inflances, Evilly Good; and Good, Evil: This, we may fee, is every Day practifed by them. And in History, we find, that forme whole Nations, have freely gone into Practices, which have been Objects of Avertion and Abomination to disoft all the reft of the World; which hath plainly proceeded from forme poculiar Habits of Thinking, and their mistaken Notions of the Happiness of Schicky and of the natural Good of Mankind MAN this is tinquestionable. But yet it will not follow from hence, that a Man of common Understanding, and Fairness of Mind, may mot by attending to the Dictates of his Conficience, both come to a fufficienc Knowledge of his Duty, and feel his Obligation to perform it. Thor though this Power doth mot indeed exnetly define the feveral Virtues and Vices, Dary,

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nor adjust and fettle their Limits to a Point; yet, it fixeth a general Standard, by which we may examine, and make an Estimate, of the Good, or Evil, and of the Merit, or Denterit of our whole Beliaviour. This Standard is the farme, with that, which the Doctrine of our divine Mafter and Infructor, haris eftablifted as the Suny of our whole Duth and the Test of all Virac with Love of God, the Love of Mankind, and a Defere of our own bigbal Dignery and Partition Whoevery is estimable and worthy, and able mand goodh in a moral Compination antilt his ultimately reloved informe, for infothe self thefes we can have no Morion of -any Excellence of Melan which is not reducible to vor comprehended under their: As engl Thing accomined dicloss wile, and deletestep at sleich by Men of Ri-Rection, the incomplication with parel rapid-- sout to them brandons bid Gurand Princinter of the Cition in Metro war here! itre! F 4 feienofera gai

fere with one another, but are perfectly harmonious and concordant, and always go together, wherever any one of them prevaileth remarkably in the Mind, they are uniformly and invariably approved by our Consciences, and lare indeed the natural Test, to which, we are to bring the particular Inflances of our moral Conduct whenever we would judge truly of the Nature of them, which must be deemed to be good, or bad, worthy, or ill-deferving, saccording to their Agreementa or Disagreement with it. By this Standard; therefore the expressing Lour Respect, and Love to God, the Exercise of our Benevolence to Men, and the mifing the more noble Powers and Affections of our own Nature, every Man of a tolerable Capacity, and of Honelty of Heart, may examine the feveral Parts of his Behaviour, and know whether they are to be justified on candemned or who ther they are worthy of him, and becom-

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ing him, or otherwife, Thus, if he findeth, that the Tenor of his Actions in general, is conformable to the best Notions that he hath of the Reverence and Homage, which he oweth to a Being of perfect Knowledge, Purity, and Justice, and the most diffusive and universal Goodness; that vit is consistent with the common Interest, and most extensive Good of Society, and with the Rights, or just Claims of the feveral Persons with whom he hath any Intercourse; that it promoteth the Order of the World, and the Happiness of his Neighbours: That it giveth no undue Indulgence to the lower Appetites and Pattions of his Nature, but tendeth to exalt and invigorate his higher Faculties, from the Exercise and Cultivation of which, his true Excellence and Happineis, as a rational morall Agent, proceeded If his Conduct, upon a ferious and Impartial Review of it, antwereth to thele Characters, his Conni gos **fcience**

science will assuredly justify him, and pronounce his Behaviour, no be bad merely innocent and blameless, but good and worthy, fo far as the unavoidable infirmities of his Nature will permit it to be fo. Whereas, on the other Hand, if his Behaviour, instead of being adapted to the Nature of a perfectly wife, powerful, holy, righteous, and good Being, which is the just Notion of the true Gode is calculated only to please some Phantom of Divinity, weak and paffionate, vain and infolent, envious soil trud prificing stead of flowing from the generous Principles of Justice and public Spirity His manity and Bettevolence, and of contributing to the Benefit of Society, and the Good of particular Persons, de taketh its Rife from form low and meanly felfifth Passions, and disturbeth the Peast of the World; and engreacheth on the Properties and Rights of Men , If instead of improving those Faculties and Affections

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in him, which are the Foundation of his highest Glory and Happines, it rendereth the inferior Principles in his Conflitution headfrong and ungovernable | and thereby throweth him into a State of great Diforder Ignonting, and Weethedness If his Behaviour, either fit general, or in any particular linkances, upon a free and close Examination of it, proveth to be of this Kind his Conscience will certainly condemnity as altogether evil and with worthy; notwithstanding any plansible Appearances, which fome Parts of it might have carried, while he furveyed them only negligently and inattentively, of Innocence, or even of fome Sorts of Virtue itself. And thus the Authority of Confeience, as the fupreme commanding Faculty in the Mindboat othe Guide of Life, and the Judge of our whole Conducto is established, notwithstanding the different, and fornetimes contradictory Speculations and Opinions of Men, as to ccived certain

certain moral Forms and Qualities; as it hath laid a Foundation, on which, every Man who pleafeth, may, in the Midft of all that Confusion and Diversity of moral Sentiments, which he may find among Mankind, guard himfelf against all material Mistakes at least, as to the Principles of a good Conduct ; and eafily form at clear and confiftent Scheme of Virtue, and perceive that he is under a frict Obligation to adhere to itim And thus likewife, it is evident, that our primary Notices of Duty, or of moral Obligation, arise from the Dictates of this divine Principle in our Constitution, independently on all Institution, Custom, and Education, Things, which can give us, neither new Faculties, nor new Notions which may indeed enable us, to extend and enlarge our Sentiments, and are often the Occasion of our forming certain Combinations and Affociations of the Ideas, which we have antecedently recertain ceived,

ceived, which, perhaps, as often lead us into Error, as into Truth; which, how, ever, it is always in our Power, by Attention and Pains, to correct and altera So that we may come to fee Things in the Light, in which our natural Powers. duly exerted, originally present them to the Mind., ad blucer reverence blove of

or offensive, to this most respectable and Another most powerful Obligation, which every Man of common Reflection, Religion, and Fairnels of Mind, may find himself from the Beunder, to adhere to Religion, and to obey its Laws, will arise from his Belief of the Existence of God, and the Persuasion that he may attain to, of the Truth of a future State, in which Men will be rewarded, or punished, according to their good, or evil Conduct in this World. If a Man is really convinced of the Existence of a Deity, a Being of all possible Perfection; and hath any deep and lively Sense of the transcendent Dignity of his Character, one

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Character, he must necessarily be filled with the frongen Sentiments of Veneration and Duty towards him; and from confidering himfelf, as acting always in his Presence, must find all the most powerful Principles in his Nature, concurring, to make him extremely exreful, to avoid whatever would be displeasing, or offensive, to this most respectable and adorable Being, and to do all the Things that are agreeable to him, and necessary to gain his Approbation and Favour. Thus the Belief of a Deity, will certainly operate in every ingenuous Man, whose Mind is attentive to the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature, and whole Heart is duly impressed, or penetrated with it: And the Efficacy of this Belief, will be still the more remarkable, if a Man contemplateth the Deity, not only as a Being of the most conformate and immutable Excellence, but as his natural and rightful Lord and Governor, as the

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one supreme Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy; who bath actually prescribed a Law to him, and animadverteth on his Conduct, with manifest Tokens of his Favour, or Displeasure, even in this World; and who will do fo, much more clearly and fenfibly in a future State. And as a future State of Retribution, in Afuture State. which every one shall reap, rebat be bene foweth, is a capital Article of Religion, which must make a Part in every Scheme of it, that is rational and confident, I shall on this Account, without imagining myself able, to advance any Thing new on an Argument, which hath been for much canvaffed by the wifest and best of Men, here briefly point out some of the general Heads of Evidence, on which, a Man of ordinary Abilities, and impartiality of Mind; may perfuade himfelf of the Truth of this State; and afterwards confider what Effect his Persuasion of it, must paturally have upon himy alaining

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Against the Possibility of our existing in a future State, and partaking of Happiness, or of Misery in it, the hardiest Unbeliever, it is plain, cannot produce the Appearance of an Argument. On the contrary, it feemeth to be extremely probable, or rather altogether certain, that the same Power and Wisdom of God, which brought us into this World, and supported us in it, for many Years, in which we enjoyed many Pleasures, and likewise endured various Pains, can raise us up in another State, capable of the fame, or of much higher Pleasures and Pains, and continue us in that State to all Eternity, if he pleafeth. William dates point out form of the

And that we shall actually exist in a future State, may be presumed, with great Probability, from the immateriality of the Soul. Whoever reflecteth with Attention, on the percipient and active Principle within him, must soon be sensible,

fible, that is quite diffine from the Body, over which it prefideth; that it is sudowed with Powers and Qualities, intirely disparate to the Properties and Afforious of Matter, to which therefore, it hath no Affinity. So that the Soul must be anginamaterial Principle; A and from this impateriality of the Soul, though we carnot infer fuch a necessary Immortality of it, as is independent on the Power and Will of its Creator; yet, we may conclude, that the Diffolution of the Body, will not infer the Diffolution of the Soul; but that this, on the contrary, is naturally framed for a State of Immortality; and that it seemeth to be the Intention of its Creator, in making it of such a Nature, that it should survive the corruptible Body, and think, and act, and enjoy, in a State of Separation from it, and with more Freedom and Enlargement, in all probability, than in its present State of Confinement to the Body, it can do. tue,

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This must appear to be full more credible, when we attend to the noble Powers, and excellent Qualifies of the Soul; its Understanding, Reach, Me mory, Invention, its Capacities for Wife dom and Knowledge; its generous in-Minch and Affections, its Senie of Beauty, Order, Harmony, Proportion, in divine Approbation and Love of Virtue: That Nature, which is the Subject of fuch great Endowments, and felch lamiable Qualities, may, agreeably to the Realoning of forme of the Antients, be fully prefumed to be more than Mortally especi cially confidering, that the Powers and Faculties of the Soul. never arrive in this World, at a State of full Perfection; not even in those, who have the greaten Opportunities for cultivating the Mind, and who apply themselves to it, with the up most Diligence. After all the Improve ments, which the wifelt and ben of Mankind, make in Knowledge and Via tue,

tile, they find that only an infatiable Defire, but a real Capacity of greater Knowledge, and of a fublimer Virtue, ternaming in them; that their Minds are not to be fatisfied with any Acquifitions in Witdoin and Goodness; that their Tafte for here Tange, particularly for the latter, initead of being decayed, or worn out with Use and Time, is always growing mole keen and nocity. And if the most refined and generous Spirits among Man-Mind, do necessarily in this Life, fall thore aposhe frue Berrección of their Nature, how much more evidently must this be the Cafe of the gross Body of Men; Who, and the Hurry and Confusion of their worldry Affairs, building take but fittle Time and Pains, for improving their spiritual and divine Part, which, therefore, lieth in a miserable State of Desolation and Deformity, and is But Hitle Sandard out Thuiltin of those Qualities and Virtues, Which are its Higher Ornaments and Exaccording

of a facure Judgment.

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cellencies ? The Confequence of all which, feemeth to be, that either, this most curious and exquisite Piece of divine Workmanship, the Soul of Man, hath been made in a great Measure in vain; or, there must be a future State, where it will be brought into a more august and ample Scene; where the Sphere of its Perception and Activity will be greatly enlarged; where its Powers and Affections, will have much more noble Opportunities of unfolding and exerting themselves, and improving to a Degree of Vigour and Perfection, vally superior to what they could arrive at, in this World. Whether the latter, be not, at least the more probable Conclusion, let every one of the smallest Reflection spiritual and divine Part, which, tabui

The Evidence of a future Judgment. Farther, that we shall not only exist in a suture State, but that we shall be adjudged to Happiness, or Misery, in it, according

according to our good, or bad Conduct in this World, may be flrongly argued from the moral Confitution of our Natime. It is plain, that we are made with a Power, which giveth us the Notions of inoral Good, and Evil; of a right, and a wrong Conduct; which floweth as the Excellence and Worth of the one; and the Baleness and Ill-defert of the other; and which authoritatively requireth us, to adhere to the oney and to tkeep at the greatest Distance from the other Don this, we immediately fee, that the Dietates of this Faculty are the Law, which the Author of your Beings hathraid us under; and that we are accountable to him for our Observance, or Violation of the And in confequence of thele Sentiments, we find, that we are filled with Joy, Comforth and Affurantes for heath Sorrow, Anguith, and Dejection, according as verlobey him Lave, which in our Creation was enjoined upon its for many G 35 gres those

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greis it From this Account of the Con-Ritution of our Nature, which is by no means, fictious, or fenciful but which every one, who is eagable of making ony just Reflections on hunself, and Observations on other Men; may find to be mue; we may with great Forces infer that we are to fland before God in Judgment, in another World; ab Mismothst all ger dible, that Mankind should be for capeiniously formed, as paturally, and dimest necessarily, to entertain an Aspadation of their undergoing a future Judgment if it was intended, that there should be no Event, that could answer that Expecunder and that we are ne duntahouse him for our Observance, or Violation of

Judgeselle in another World, for our good, or coll Conduction this, is a Thing Aill more clear and certain, Afrom the moral Character of God. He, as was observed before, is believe, invested with those

those Attributes and Properties which necessarily make him the Governor of Men, confidered as rational moral Asents; who must animadvert upon their Conduct, as it is morally good, or had, and make them fentibly feel the Effects of his Approbation or Condemnation. Accordingly, we find, that he hath actually begun a firicily moral Administration even in this World, that he is now acting towards us in the Character of a rightsons Governor and Judge 128 be maketh the highest Enjoyments and the greatest Sufferings, which we experience, dependent on our Actions, as they are morally good, or evil; and rewardeth, or punisheth us remarkably, at least in many Inflances, according to our Merits or Demarits | But as notwithflanding the general Plan of a moral Administration, exhibited to us, under the Diffentations of Providence in this World, this prefent Life, is by no means, a State of adequate G 4

and full Retribution; as it is certain, that the moral Government of God. would appear to be very defective, will it was to Be carried to no greater Petres tion, than it is in this World, where in many Cafes, Vittue is diffiched and afflicted, perfecuted and oppressed; while Vice is easy and fecure "flowing and trilingual, we must conclude from the known Attributes and Character of the Deity, that he will not leave the great Work which he hath begun, imperfect; but that he intendeth, in forme future Scene, to raile a fair and noble Superftructure, on the Foundations, which he hath already laid; ito complete the system of his moral Administration, and to make it to appear altogether bright and beautiful; by its doing due Honour, and fulls Rightible the respective Merits of good a Ment, sandushy affiguing titled the Wicked, a Lot of infamy and Milery, bliff, is by no means, a State of adequate bas C 4

fuited to the Depravity and Iniquity of their Behaviour.

Upon these Foundations, the Doca future State, and the Judgment, which they will undergo in that State, in the general, principally standeth, so far as the Light of Nature, can make a Discovery of these great Events. And from the fame Source of Evidence, all the principal and most interesting Circumstances of the future Judgment of Mankind, may be clearly and eafily traced out. As first, the universal Extent of it, with Respect both to the Persons, who shall be judged, and the Things, for which they are to be The Persons who are to be judged, are plainly all Mankind; all the Generations of them, who have ever lived, and all, who shall be found alive, at the Conclusion of this present Scene, and the Approach of the future Judgment ...

The univerfal Extent of the future Judgment.

ment; because, all of them, are by their Nature, equally the Subjects of the ral Kingdom of God, and equally accountable to him, for their moral Behaviour, And the Things, for which they are to be judged, are all the Works. which they have done, as intelligent moral Agents; the most hidden and secret of them, as well as those which are more open and manifest; their less remarkable good Deeds, as well as their more emi forme Source of Evidence all the principle of the principle of the source of the source of the principle of Offences, as well as their more flagrant Crimes: Because, for the same Reasons, that they are accountable for any Part of their moral Conduct, they are evidently accountable for the whole of it; and because the same Perfections of God, which make him to take Cognizance of any of their Actions, which partake of Virtue, or of Vice, must determine him to take Cognizance of all of them that do fo. bat the Conclusion of this present Scene

and the Approach of the future Judg-

The univerfal Extent of the future Judgment.

ment ;

And as to the Righteousness. Impartiality and Equity of that Judgment, which God will hereafter pass upon Mankind these may with the greatest Containty be deduced from the Nature of Gods As it is impossible that a Being perfectly wife boly just, and good, can be governed in the Sentenge, which will finally fix the Fate of Men, by any Confideration, but that of their real Characters, as morally good, or evil, in his Sight, Hawilkindeed them all due Indulgence to the Informities of the human Nature; but fill he will act in perfect Confidency with the Dignity of his own Character, es the supreme, universal, moral Ruler, by acquitting or condenning Men at laft according to the Quality of their Actions, as virtuous, or vicious, and even in affign ing the syety one of them. a Degree of Happines, or of Misery, proportioned to the Good, or Evil, of their Conduct.

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The Righteourness and Impartiality of the future Judgment.

the Light of

Nature.

A future State of Existence, and of Retribution, very probable from the Light of Nature.

Thus far the common Light of Nature and Reason leadeth us, in discovering a future State of Existence, and of Retribution, remaining for Mankind, after their Departure from this World; by Arguments, which are in the Main at leaft, fufficiently accommodated to the cal pacifies of all Men? The greaten Bart of them, indeed, fall in to hinch with the natural Sentiments and Pretumptions of the human Mind! wherever is accorden to the Subject of a future State, that the calified but maked a great implehed of all, who deliberately enter winto them, and feriously consider them . Those of them, particularly, which are deduced from the moral Attributes and Character of God, feeth to care fuch a Force of Conviction in them, as can hardly be refifted, by any capable and candid Inquirer. And it is the more necessary to take notice of this, as many Persons, wider

der the Notion of raising the Importance of the Christian Revelation, seem to be willing to undervalue all the natural Evidence of a future State, and to refolve any stedfast Belief that we can have of it, intirely into the Discovery which the Gospel hath made of it. But herein, they neither judge truly, nor act prudently; For whatever strong additional Affurance the Gospel may have given of future Existence, it may still be justly affirmed to be only a Corroboration of the Presumptions of Reason in the Case, a farther Confirmation, and a fuller Establishment of a Point, which had before, a pretty clear and deep Foundation in Nature. The afferting of which, instead of detracting from the Merit of the Gofpel, and the Value of its Discoveries, tendeth to the Honour of Christianity, and the representing it in a more advantageous Light. For furely, every rational Believer of the Gospel, must be pleased

to find, that the Doctrine, which it defivereth on this most momentous Article of à future Life, doth not depend folely on its politive Allertion, or Testimony; but that the same Doctrine in the Main, is, at feart with the highest Probability, to be collected from the apparent Intentions of God, in the Conditution of human Nature, and the Confideration of his most perfect moral Character. This View of the Matter, mult, certainly, procure a more easy and firm Reception of the Christian Doctrine, with Respect to a future State, from all Men of Reflection and Candour; While it doth not leave those unhappy Perions, who either do not know, or do not believe the Gorpel, as the contrary Representation doth, quite destinute of the Hope of a future Existence, nor altogether deprive them, of the Influence of the Motive, which arnets from the Expectation of it, to the Practice of Virtue. That the generality of Men.

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Purpose, is, that the Light of Nature
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limated Eternity to Man, when he faith
fully followeth this Odide in this Searches
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Arguments, which it offered for an immortal State, it has a faith of the faith

The Efficacy of the Belief of a forme State, for on gaging Mea to Verue.

peddhog is a wold regional of heroman and his wholever ariaineth to a firm and lively Perfusion of the Trith of facts a function which lie is to be incondevably tappy; for emiterable, according to his good, or all Beliaviour in this Life, thus, for guarding this important, for guarding this importance, and exciting him bushe greatest Zeat and Diligence in the singlish

The Efficacy of the Belief of a future State, for engaging Men to Virtue. Performance of this Duty. Which is the only Thing, that remaineth to be a little illustrated, before we quit this Argument and which may be dispatched in few Words. For, how indeed is it possible. that a Man, who reflecteth feriously on his Situation in this World that he fe placed here, but for a short, and a very uncertain Time; who knoweth that his present State, is a Scene of Discipline and Probation for an infinitely more important one, which is to come; and that the Consequences of his Actions in this tranfient Scene, will extend themselves into the remotest Futurity: How is it possible, I fay, that one, who believeth, and confidereth all this, and hath a just and deep Impression of it in his Mind, should not be, above all Things folicitous and intent. to obey his Maker, and righteous Governor, and by a patient Continuance in Welldoing, to feek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality; and to avoid whatever would displease Perform

displease his supreme Ruler and Judge, and which, in the End, would expose him to everlasting Consustion, and the most exquisite Distress? To one, who thinketh truly in this Matter, how poor and insignificant, how empty and vain a Phantom must this World appear? And how must he undervalue and despise, whatever is most gay and splendid, and most alluring and pleasing in it, in Comparison of that State of Heart, and that Tenor of Life, which will give him a well-grounded Considence towards God, and good Hopes, as to his suture and everlasting Condition?

How must the Consideration of our probationary State in this Life, and its Connection with our eternal Condition in the next, if calmly entered into, and suffered to take a full Possession of the Mind, controll and moderate our Delires and Affections, towards all the grand of H

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Objects of the Pursuits of Men in this World? How for Instance, must k check and reftrain us, in the Career of our Ambition, when for obtaining fome Marks of Distinction and Applause from vain Mortals, that Paffion would carry us to do Things, unbecoming the Digrity of our Nature, and inconfishent with our Expectations of that substantial and unfading Honour, which cometh from God? How must it likewise damp us, if engaged in a Course of licentious, or fantaftic Pleasure; and make us fick of those mean, deceitful, and uncertain love, which vanish in a Moment, which at best gratify only our lower Powers of Sensation and Perception, which impair our higher Faculties, and bring manifold Inconveniencies on us at present mand which would at last exclude us from that Fulness of Joy, which is in the Presence of God, and deprive us of the most sublime. folid, and manly Delights, which will Objects H be

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be the Product of Improvements in Knowledge, Wildom, and Virtue for evermore? And how must the same Confideration disconcert and confound our Schemes of Avarice, and convince us, if any Thing at all can, of the monstrous Folly of laying up Goods for ourselves, for many Years, upon Earth, while we fet no Value upon the true Riches, and are at no Pains to intitle ourselves, to that Inberitance, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away? Without all Question, a serious, habitual, and lively Conviction, that we are hereafter to reap, what we now fow, must prevent all the Exorbitancies, or criminal Excesses of our Passions and Affections; must give these a good and happy Direction, and keep them in a perfect Subordination to the one great Defire, of approving ourselves to our Governor and Judge, and obtaining from him, in the great Day of Retribution, the sucirolat find out st things for all virturous

Offices,

glorious Reward, which he hath prepared for his faithful Servants.

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The Success that will attend our Endeavours in Virtue, another Obligation to Religion.

There is yet another Obligation, or practical Confideration, which a Man who inquireth into Religion, may find out, for engaging him to observe the Laws of Religion, or to perform those moral Duties which it requireth; which is, that his fincere Endeavours, to attain to some Perfection in Virtue, will certainly be attended with Success. For as Virtue is wholly adapted to the Constitution of our Nature, and is of all Things most agreeable to our leading Faculties and Affections, if we will faithfully exert our Powers, in the Acquisition of it, we shall quickly make fome confiderable Advances in it: Or, if we should meet with any Hardships, or Difficulties, to retard our Progress at the first, these, through Perseverance and Custom, will soon abate, and we shall find our Abilities for all virtuous Offices.

Offices, daily increasing; and go on afterwards, in a Course of them, with Ease and Pleasure. Besides, it may be expected, that God, who is a Lover of Goodness, and who taketh Pleasure in the Perfection and Happiness of his rational Creatures, will concur with our Endeavours, and effectually affift us, in attaining to that State of moral Dignity and Felicity, of which, he hath made us capable. It is certain, that fome of the -wifer men among the Heathens, had an Expectation of this Affiftance, and that they proposed the Consideration of it, as they justly might, as an incentive to Diligence, Activity, and Zeal in the Practice of Virtue. And indeed when God hath out our Duty fo much in our Power, must we not be altogether inexculable, if we neglect it? If he had required Impoffibilities at our Hands, our Obligation to ferve him, would have ceased; or if the Performance of our Duty had been at-H 2 tended

tended with some very great Distinuities, we might have had some Sort of Pretence for omitting it. But when nothing is required from us, but what is quite practicable and easy; nothing, but what is perfectly agreeable and pleasing to our Nature, and is in every Respect eligible by us, what shall we be able to say for our Disobedience? At best, it must arise from a most unaccountable Slothfulness and Folly in us: And is not even this Temper, in a Matter of such Consequence, utterly perverse, and unworthy; and may it not justly expose us, to the Displeasure and Condemnation of God?

So far, a Man, who faithfully exerteth his natural Powers, and improve all the Advantages which he hath, exclusively of an extraordinary Revelation, for fearthing into Religion, may proceed, in tracing out the Principles, the Duties, and the mod had you all the Obligations

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Obligations of it. Such a Scheme of Religion, as hath been delineated, undoubtedly, falleth within the Proxince of Nature; as it hath actually been made out by many, very clearly, accurately, and fully, abstracting from the Discoveries of a fupernatural Revelation. And whoever of those, who want the Advantage of fuch a Revelation, fincerely embraceth this Scheme, will find it abundantly sufficient for his Instruction and Direction in the feveral Parts of his Duty, and upon his acting freadily under the Influence of it, for giving him an humble Hope and Confidence towards God. Whether any Man, or any Number of Men, had the Knowledge of Religion, either in the Whole, or in Part, supernaturally insused into them, at first, is a Point, concerning which, though we may make Conjectures, yet, we can come to no politive Determination as we have no fufficient Light, or Information to proceed on, in refolving H 4 deceived

The Scheme of Religion above laid down, falleth within the Province of Nature. The Scheme

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resolving the Question. But whatever the Fact was, there feemeth to be no Neceffity, for our having Recourse to the Hypothesis, of a supernatural Inspiration of Religion, into the Minds of the first Men, to account for their being pofferfed of a rational and confiftent Scheme of Theirm and Morality; as the Powers and Faculties, with which the Author of their Nature had supplied them, if properly used, would, as certainly and easily have led them to the Knowledge of Religion, and of all locial and moral Duties, as to an Aequaintance with the Principles of the most simple Inventions, and Arts in Life. It hath, however, been faid, that Men, in the rude unexperienced State, in which they were fituated in a new World, very much unaccustomed, as it is probable, to a found and vigorous Exercise of their reasonable Faculties, on any Subjects whatfoever; but little acquainted with Nature, and therefore eafily to be refolving deceived

deceived by some glaring Appearances; were in great Danger of falling into Errors, Tin forme very important Points of Religion; at least much mere fo, than those are, who have the Use of their Reafon, in a more mature State of it, and are fo far advanced in the Knowledge of Nature, and its feveral Parts, as to run no Hazard, of mistaking the proper Object of their Adoration and Worship, from any of its Phenomenava Now all this may be allowed, very confiftently, with our faying, that Men, in the most early Ages of the World, might have guarded against this supposed Danger, by such a diligent and prudent Exercise of their natural Faculties, as might have been expedied from them, even in their Situation; and by those Affistances, which some Persons of deeper Reflection, might have communicated to others, of less Discernment, for enabling them to judge truly of the Deity, and his Worship, and other other effential Articles of Religion; especially, as they must probably, have had the Advantage of some primitive Traditions, concerning these Matters, which, according to the then State of Things, may be prefumed to have come down. in a great Measure, pure and uncorrupted to them; and as the Inconvenience, arifing from their want of Experience, and their Ignorance of the Constitution of Nature, might have been clearly overballanced, by the Simplicity and Purity of Manners, which may not unreasonably be supposed to have continued, for a confiderable Time after the Creation, among a great Part of Mankind; and which, if they really did take Place, could not but be a great Help to them, both in forming true Opinions of the principal Articles of Religion, and in continuing to act rightly, under its Influence and Di-Diferenment, for enabling their moithing

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But to fay nothing more of those, who, at first, attained in the Use of their natural Faculties, and of other human Advantages in their Power, to a just and comprehensive Knowledge of Religion; it is plain, that in Times, fuceeeding long afterwards, even when Religion was, in almost all Parts of the World, most miferably obscured and defaced, by a Mixture of Polytheisin, Idolatry, and Super-Rition, or a Multiplicity of the groffest Errors and Absurdities, several Persons were full able to reason themselves, into a Belief and Acknowledgment of all the principal Truths of genuine Theilm, and of fome others, closely connected with them; and to draw out a very compleat and perfect System of the divine, social, and moral Virtues. This will hardly be denied by any, who know the History of the Philosophers, or of the learned Men among the ancient Heathers, and are acquainted with their Sentiments and Te-Mistakes nets.

nets. And if it should be faid, that though the Philosophers, or the Sages among the old Heathers, did indeed ombrace all the chief Doctrines of true Religion, and the Principles of moral Piety and Virtue; yet they held them, not in their original Simplicity, but in Conjunction with some great Errors, or very false Notions, in feveral important Points, which were inconfiftent with many of their best Doctrines, or in their Confequences overthrew them: To this, it may be answered, that admitting the Thing to be true, though perhaps it is not fo much fo, as hath-been commonly thought, at least in Regard to the more eminent Philosophers; yet, it is really no more than what may be objected to many of the Learned, at this very Day, who with all the Advantages of the Light, both of Reason, and of divine Revelation, admit into their Creeds, or Systems, along with the most important divine Truths, several Mistakes, ners.

Mistakes, or Errors; some of them shockingly absurd, and others of a worse Character, and a more malignant Tendency. But if it cannot be justly inferred from the Mixture of Error in the Systems of the latter, that they do not believe all the main Principles of true Religion, and of good Morals; so neither can it be concluded from the Inconsistencies in the Schemes of the former, that they did not likewise believe these Things.

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As for the generality of Mankind, or the great Body of them, it is certain, that from any Accounts extant of them, there is no Reason to think, that in any Age, or Nation, they ever formed, without the Assistance of a supernatural Instruction, any Thing like a rational and well-digested Scheme of Religion, and of the Measures of a right Behaviour: On the contrary, they have almost always fallen into a great deal of gross Ignorance and Super-

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Scheme of Religion; without the Superstition as to Points of Religion; and into a great Depravity and Corruption, perhaps, of Sentiment, as well as of Practice, as to their moral Conduct. It must, however, be observed, that Complaints against them, even in these Respecie, have, by some, been abundantly too much aggravated; who, not contenting themselves, with declaring the Condition of Mankind in general, when deftitute of the Advantages of an extraordinary Revelation, to be very deplorable and unhappy, which is indeed the Truth of the Cafe, have represented them, as totally and univerfally blinded and corrupted as to all the Affairs of Religion and Morality. This is a Case, not incident, perhaps, to any Individual of the human Kind, much less to the greatest Part of Men; who, with all the Furniture of intellectual and moral Faculties, of generous Inftincts, and honest Affections, which they originally received from their -10ge 8 Creator.

Creator, can never possibly, especially if living in any kind of a civilized and focial State, fink fo far into Ignorance and Barbarity, as to lofe absolutely all Sense and Knowledge of Religion and Virtue. and all Regard to the Practice of them. The Evidences of the main Articles of Religion, relating to the necessary Difference between Virtue and Vice, the Being and Attributes of God, his Government of Mankind, and their Accountableness to him in a future State, for their Conduct in this World, are fo very clear and strong, that they sometimes thine through all the Darkness and Confusion, in which the Errors and Prejudices of Mankind, involve them, and force themselves into every Understanding, that is at all capable of perceiving them: And the Dispositions, from whence the Duties of Religion and Morality flow, are to interwoveh in our Make and Couffitution that except Men but off their Nature, fce

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ture, or divert themselves of their most effential Powers and Properties, there must be always something of the Practice of moral Piety and Righteoufness among them. The Principle of Conscience, is itself sufficient to keep some Sense of Religion alive in the Minds of Men; and in Fact, this Principle, in Conjunction with their naturally good Affections, engageth the Generality of them, in the Midst of all their Corruptions, to many worthy and commendable Actions; indeed to a great many more, than those, who are always full of melancholy Thoughts, and uneasy Suspicions, about the extreme Depravation and Wickedness of the World, are apt to imagine. This is in a great Measure evident, from the Consideration of that Order, Tranquillity, and Happiness, which subsist in the several Communities, and various Relations of Mankind; which could never be maintained, in the Degree, in which we ינערכ. fee

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fee them to prevail, merely by external Force, or the Fear of human Punishment; if there were not forme internal Principles in Men, which freely determined them to the Actions necessary for the Preservation of them. blo and to this Improvement, by their Conduct

No part of what hath been now faid, is mended to palliate, or diffuile, the very corrupted and wretched State of the greatest Part of Men, in the ancient Pagan World, with Respect, both to their speculative Notions of Religion, and their Practice of the common Duties of Mo-Though no good End can be ever ferred, by vilifying the Powers of their Nature, and by throwing a greater Doad of Folly and Wickedness upon them, than there is any Reafon for ; yet GO Access their Condition, it must be owned, was of the various Kersh of falls fufficiently bad : It must indeed have Religion, na been Thocking, as we find it actually was, on he govern to the few Men of Reflection among Opinions them,

them, who knew to what a noble Height of Knowledge and Virtue, human Nature was capable of arriving, from a due Cultivation and Exercise of its original and effential Powers. The greatest Part of the old Heathers, instead of aiming st this Improvement, by their Conduct brought the very Reverse of it, upon themselves: By an utter Neglect in cultivating their natural Faculties, nav., by a groß Perversion and Abuse of these Faculties, and not from their Infufficiency to have directed them wall, if they had made that good Improvement of them. which they might, and which it became them to have made, they fell into a State of fuch gross Idolatry, Superstition, and Ignorance, and fuch a great Degeneracy and Corruption in their moral Behavious, as were extremely diffraceful to their Nature, and rendered a great Part of their Conduct, altogether abominable and detestable. The impious and superstitious **Opinions** them.

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Opinions which they held, and the great Depravation and Corruption of their ideines, had probably a reciprocal bad Influence, and tended to firengthen and increase one another. And thus Things went on among them, from bad, to worle till willes Corruptions of Mankind with Some few Exceptions always in every Age and Country, and with a confiderable Mitigations or Abatement of the malignant Symptoms din feveral Parts even of the infected Mals, became in a great Measure universal, and a faire Religion, of a very immoral Tendency, spead itself, as far as we know, through the leveral Nations of the World Horsey tion of the shir Pager World, midt have

Account of the various Species of falle Religion, which prevailed in the different Countries of the Earth, would be an extremely difficult, or rather an impossible Undertaking. It is certain, that after all the

A clear and full Account of the various Kinds of false Religion, not to be given.

the Labours and Refearches of the Learned, a great Part, both of the Theology, and of the Ceremonial of ancient Paganism, lieth in the utmost Uncert tainty and Confusion . I Shall go but a very thort Way into this Subject , and should not have touched on it a all were it not that it hath a Connexion with fome Things which have been already confidered, and that fome general Review of it, may athrow a little Light on some Points of Importance, which are vet to be established ... Whoever would center into any large, critical, and nicely cudous Disquisitions, about the Origin and Progression of the Idolatry and Superstition of the old Pagan World, must have Recourse to some of the many learned and able Writers, who have treated these Points with profound Erudition, and great Ingenuity and Refinement. In the few general Reflections, which shall be here offered on this Subject, we shall endea-

A clear and full Account of the various Kinds of false Religion, not to be given.

your to take Nature, and some undoubted historical Facts for our Guide; and relying upon these, the following seemeth to be a just summary Account of the Rife, and gradual Advances of the System of the Gentile Polytheism, and Superstition. Things to think of tracing the Poppels

As Mankind, from the Narrowness and Limitation of their highest and best false Religion. Faculties, and from the frequent interfering of some inferior Principles in their Conflication, with their higher and better Powers, are necessarily liable to Error, and a Depravity of Affection; Miftakes and Errors, both of a speculative and practical Nature, must soon have been introduced among them. And thought the speculative Errors of the greatest Part of Men, at first, were probably but flight, and of no very hialige hant and dangerous Tendency; vet, If no due Pains were taken to correct them. and to guard against the like for the fu--wlasm

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ture, which perhaps was the Gafe, they would eafily increase and multiply; and prepare the Way for the generality of Men's falling into the groffest Abfurdities, and the most fatal Delutions. It would, certainly, be a very vain and idle Thing, to think of tracing the Progress of Error, or to point out the Order, in which one Mistake, or Folly led on to another; till all ended in a monstrous Composition, or Medley, of Absurdity and Falshood; which had almost overy whelmed Truth, in some capital Points, and gone a great Way in extinguishing the Light of Nature in the Minds of Men; which had, certainly, deprived the greatest Part of them, of a rational and confiftent Knowledge of the true God, and of the Duties, which Mankind owed to him; which had brought them to admit the Belief of many Gods, and in Confequence of that, had thrown them into a stopid Idolatry, and into an unmanly, ture,

manly, and very often an immeral and vile Superstition. It must not, however, Polytheism be inferred from hence, that Polytheifm and Idolatry were the primitive Profelfion and Religion of Men. If we believe the commonly received Account of the Creation of Man, which feemeth to be in itself, abstracting from the Authority of the Historian, full as probable, as any other that hath been fuggested; it is by no Means credible, that the first formed Man, and his Descendants for some few Generations, should have lost the Knowledge of that great Being, who had so recently brought the Universe into Existence, and of many of whose Perfections. they must have had a very lively Sense; or, that they could have failed, to render Part at leaft, of that Homage, or Worthip, which became them, to him. Befides this, as the Notion of the true God. must, in the Order of Nature, have preceded the Conception of an imaginary,

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who was the Object of their first and supreme Worship; while together with him, they acknowledged some inferior Divinities, or some Beings, invested by the fupreme Deity, with a certain Portion of divine Power and Dominion, to whom they allowed a subordinate, or a lower

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and Superstition, the Doctrine of the Unity of God, was absolutely lost among Men. For the wifer Men in the Gentile World, feem very generally and uniformly, to have believed the Existence of one original Being, the first Cause, and the great Ruler and Lord of all Things,

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Error of a bad Tendency; though not a greater, or a worse one, than what with a little Variation, may be charged on many profefiedly zealous Christians, even at this Day. Nay, even the vulgar Pagans, for the most Part, acknowledged and revered one supreme Divinity, according to the Doctrine of their great Instructors in Religion, their Poets and Mythologists; though in all Probability, the inferior local Deities, in whom they believed, engaged their Attention, and engroffed their Respect and Veneration, in a much higher Degree, than he did, whom, in Words they owned to be the Father of Gods, and of Men.

But to go on with our Account of the Corruptions of Religion, among the ancient Heathens. It is not possible to fix the precise Time, or, perhaps, to point out with Certainty, the particular Country, in which Idolatry first appeared: But

Knowledge of the Creator, might calify

The first Idolatry of Men consisted in the Deisication and Worship of the heavenly Bodies. as these are Matters of small Consequence. we need not be folicitous about them. It is plain, that long before the Days of Mofes, a false, idolatrous Worship had become very common, and prevailed in most Nations of the World. The first remarkable Idolatry, which took Place among Men, confifted in the Deification and Worship of the heavenly Bodies, particularly, of the two great Luminaries of this World. And this was indeed a Species of Idolatry, which a rude untutored Multitude, who were quite unacquainted with the Philosophy of Nature, who had loft all rational Accounts of the Creation, as well as a just and coherent Knowledge of the Creator, might eafily have fallen into. The striking Appearance of these Luminaries, the genial Warmth, and the benign enlivening Influence of one of them, and the manifold Utilities of both, would tempt such unikilful and unexperienced Reasoners,

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to imagine them to be animated intelligent Beings, the Principles of Life, and the Dispensers of all Kinds of natural Benefats to Mankind. From hence they began to contemplate them, with a fecret Admiration and Awe, and foon proceeded to substitute them in the Room of their Maker, and to give to them, the religious Veneration, or Honour, which was due to him alone. Upon fuch Principles as these, an ancient grave Historian bath affured us, that the Egyptians, particularly, concluded the Sun and Moon to be Divinities; in Confequence of which they erected Temples and Altars, and infliquided a great Variety of facred Ministrations to them. The low Vulgar, it may be supposed, offered their Worthip direcitly and immediately to these illustrious Bodies of the Universe, without any farther Reference; whereas the Men of giester Reflection among the Pagans, who were in some Measure, acquainted Viorug with

with the Constitution of Nature, and knew these Bodies, to be only Instruments in the Hands of Providence, for distributing its various Bleffings to the World, faw the Abfurdity of any Worship, which terminated in them; and yet, being willing, for fome Reasons, to fupport and keep in Countenance this Sort of Idolatry, pretended to worship them, as Representatives of the Deity, or as fensible Manifestations of his divine Powers and Virtues to Mankind larly concluded the sea and Man is

Species of Idolatry, the Apotheofis of Heroes, or dead Benefactors.

This first and most early Species of Idolatry, among the Pagans, made Way fecond in Time for another Sort of it; the Apotheofis of their Heroes, or dead Benefactors. Nor was the Gradation unnatural: An ignorant befotted Multitude, who had made Gods of inanimate Beings, and, on Account of a supposed superior Excellence of Nature in them, and of certain natural Benefits, imagined to be derived delve purely

purely from their Influence, had worshipped them with the most profound Veneration, could hardly have failed, in doing the like Honour, and Homage to their Benefactors in civil Affairs; to Legiflators, and Founders of Society, to good Kings and Princes, to the Inventors of useful Arts, to Men, who by their Sagacity and Wisdom, had contributed remarkably, to the better Accommodation, and the more comfortable Enjoyment of Life. Such would be naturally confidered by them, as far superior to the rest of the Species, as a Sort of Gods, or Demigods in human Shape, even while they lived in this World; and were certainly raifed by them, in many Instances, to the Rank of Divinities after their Death, and were accordingly acknowledged and worthipped as fuch, on a Prefumption that they were actually admitted to a Share in the divine Administration, with great Form and Pomp by them. bas

them. This Honour at first, before Policy had concerned itself in the conferring of it, was confined to those, who had in fome Sort diftinguished themselves as the Benefactors and Friends of Society, and had more or less Merit with Men! But in after Times, it was most grolly abused and profituted, to the Exaltation of the Characters of fome, who, neither living, nor dying, had the least Title to Esteem and Veneration, but who on the contrary might have been deservedly treated with all the Marks of Contempt and Deteftation. Some very learned Men have thought, that this Deffication of the dead Heroes and Benefactors of the Pagans, was the original Idolatry of Mankind. But herein they are mistaken; as both the Reason of the Thing, and the Testimony of History are against them. And others, with a bad Intention, have contended, that this Species of Idolatry, was both the original Idolatry of Men, them. and

and that, in the very first Rife of it, it was altogether the Effect of Fraud and Artifice; meaning hereby to represent Religion, in its original Institution to have been a Trick, or Cheat, a Piece of State-Craft, or a mere Engine of human Policy. But if we should allow to these Men their Premiffes, their Conclusion would not at all follow; as it must, in all Reason be supposed, that a true Religion sublisted among Men, before any Kind of falle Religion whatfoever appeared; and as the apparent Utility of Religion or even of a corrupt Species of it, which according to the Scheme we are confidering, must have been the Reafor of its Invention, is to far from being an Argument of the Falishood of Religion in general, that it is rather a strong Prefumption of its Truth | But there is no Occasion for any farther Discussion of this Point; as the Facts, on which the Advertaties of Religion, build their Hypothefis,

pothesis, of its being an Imposture, are not true. The Deification of dead Men, was not the original Idolatry of Mankind; nor in the first Appearance of it, was it the Effect of Craft, or Policy. However, the Statesman, or Politician, fufficiently availed himself; of the Propenfity of Men to this Sort of Idolatry, in fucceeding Times, there is no Reason to think that he had any Hand in the Introduction of it: Nor is there any thing in the Appearance, which required his interfering. The Whole of it, may be cafily and naturally accounted for by the ordinary Motions of Nature, win a rude fimple Multitude, overflowing with Gratitude towards Persons, by whom they had greatly profited, and to whom, they thought, they could never thew too much Respect and Honour, either in their Lifetime, or after they were dead; and whom they fondly imagined, to be as dear to the supreme Being, as they were cotheffs,

to themselves, and therefore exalted by him, upon their Departure from this World, to a high Degree of divine Dignity and Dominion, as the Reward of their great Virtue, and of the eminent Services, which they performed to Men, while they lived upon Earthio To book

Men, relembling the Angels of the Years

Some have thought, and in Part truly, Of the Dethat belides the Idolatry of worthipping their dead Heroes, the Pagans were chargeable with another Sort, nearly related to it; which was their woffhipping of certain invisible aerial Beings. Demons, or Genii, as they were called, whom they supposed to have been made, or generated, by the first and supreme God and therefore subordinate. and greatly inferior to him, but much super rior to Men; whom they spoke of as the Sons and Ministers of God govern ing under him, and presiding by his Continuadid over particular Mattons Total ties, mained K

mons, or Genii-Gods of the Heathens

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ties, Countries, and Persons. And there is certainly a great deal, not only in the Poets, but likewise in the graver Writers, to Countenance this Distinction. Several of the Philosophers seem plainly to have had a Notion of a Secondary, or inferior Kind of Deities, distinct from deified Men, resembling the Angels of the Yews and Christians. And yet, there may be Reason to think, that these Genii-Gods, were at least in many Instances, no other than the Heroe-Gods, under another Form: For it is certain, that many of these latter Kind of Gods, came in following Times, to be advanced to a higher Degree of divine Dignity, than they had attained to upon their first Deification. The Fact was, their Title to Divinity, was, after some Time, called into Question, and an Attempt was made to degrade them to the Level of ordinary Men, on account of their mortal Defcent, and the Traditions, which still remained 29:3 K

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mained of their Birth and Genealogy, and of certain Exploits of their Lives, which but ill-comported with a Claim to a divine Character. And when the Foundation of the whole System of Heroe-Worthip and Superstition was thus struck at, then certain interested Persons exerted themselves in its Support; and by throwing Confusion and Obscurity into the natural History of the Heroes, by allegorifing certain Parts of their Characters, and by endowing them, by the Help of Mythology, with some new Abilities and Qualities, endeavoured to raise them, sometimes under new Names, and often under the old ones, to the Rank of middle Beings, between the first Cause of all Things, and mortal Man, leaving them still more remarkably the Honour, of being the tutelary Deities of certain Countries and Cities; in Confequence of which, they were most devoutly adored and ferved by those, of whom they were fav K 2 **supposed**

fapposed to be the Patrons and Protections tors, we saved with the antifers I mining to

but ill-compared with a Calman and

The last Species of gross Idolatry among the Pagans, consisted in the Worship of Brute-Animals, and some Parts of vegetative Nature.

The last remarkable Kind of false Religion, and of gross Idolatry, among the Pagans, confifted in their deifying and worshipping of Brute-Animals, and even of fome Parts of vegetative Nature, as certain Plants and Herbs. This Idolatry prevailed chiefly in that Country, or rather was peculiar to it, which in Antiquity is fo much celebrated for its Wildom: It feemeth to have been of a different Original, from that, of the other Species of Idolatry, which we have been confidering . Whereas the Workings of fimple uncultivated Nature, in the groß Body of Mankind, were dufficient to have given Birth to the Idolatties, which have been already mentioned this latter Kind of Idolatry, was owing to a Refinement, or Subtility, of which the Vulgar are not capable in To comprize all that we shall fay K 2 balogqui

lay upon it, in a few Words: Some learned Writers*, have made it extremely probable or rather certain, that the Idolatry of Brute, and Plant-Worship, had its Source in the famed Hieroglyphicks of the Egyptians. Thefe, in general, consisted in representing Things by Marks, and Figures, by Pictures and Symbols, and being the common Writing of the Nation, before the Use of Letters was introduced, gave Rife to innumerable emblematical Devices. Among which, Representations both of Men, and of the Gods, by certain Animals, or Vegetables, whose Virtues were thought to correspond with, or to bear forme Analogy to the diftinguishing Powers and Qualities of the Persons leprethere is executed wing to aspelle Truck

Diving Legation of Moses, where this and some other Particulars in the Account which hath been here given of the ancient Pagan Idolatry, are explained and confirmed, with great Judgment and Learning.

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fented by them, were very common. It is certain, that every Egyptian Deity, had a confecrated Animal, or some other facred Symbol belonging to him; through which, those of a philosopical Turn, pretended, that they only contemplated and adored the invisible Perfections of the represented Divinity; while the unhappy Multitude were thereby enfoared; who did then, what in all parallel Cafes, they have ever fince done; transferred their Worship, from the Original, to its Image; from the represented, to its Representative; and so to the great Disgrace of their Nature, fell into the most stupid Idolatry, of worshipping some of the lowest brutal Natures, and even Things, which had no Life, Intelligence, or Activity at all in them; exemplifying to us, the Truth of St. Paul's Account of the Idolatry of the Gentiles, who, as he telleth us, bad changed the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible coagai Man.

Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beafts, and creeping Things; and bad changed the Truth of God into a Lie, or had transformed the real Nature of God. into the merest Fictions and Vanities, and worshipped and served the Creature, more than the Creator, who is bleffed for ever. geomizidated to relationist A a b

Long before these several Kinds of Ido- The Part of latry rose to the Height, to which they in this Scene. at last arrived, there was Scope enough given to the Politicians of this World, to mix in the Scene; and to improve the Advantages, which the Weakneffes, and religious Delufions of the Multitude afforded, for subjecting them to their own Views; or for rendering them subservient to the Purpoles of their Ambition, or Avarice. Accordingly, we find, that both the Priest, and the Statesman, laid hold on the Handle, which was given to them, for debasing the Spirits, and enflaving the Minds of the deluded Part of Down K 4 Mankind:

the Politician

The Past of the Politician.

in dis Scene

Mankind; studying above all Things, to continue them in that State of gross Ignorance and Darkness into which they were fallen; guarding carefully every Avenuel by which any Light could enter into their Minds; being ever teady to palliate, or to put some specious Gloss on the Absurdities of their System, when at any Time, they were like to prove too ponderous even for their Credulity; Supplying new Matter, from Time to Time, to their Superstition to work on; and engaging them in a Variety of such impious and immoral, such fantastick and immodest, and fuch lewd and obscene Rites, as were not only unworthy of any Being, who had the least Claim to Divinity, but altogether inconfistent with the Dignity of human Nature. The Confequence of all was, that while the Ignorant abused Multitude, became the Dupes of their political Leaders, they at the fame Time, funk into a State of the utmost Mankind:

most Degeneracy as to their Morals; freely practifing some unnatural and most abominable Vices, and seeming indeed to have lost, in a great Measure, their natural Sense, both of Virtue, and of common Decency.

who were fulficiently auxiliated to hane

Into this most deplorable State, did the Bulk of Mankind fall, in Confequence of the Polytheism, and Idolatry, which had been introduced and established among them; few, or none of them, having the least Solicitude to be relieved from it, neither exerting any Endeavours of their own, nor receiving any Affistance from others, for that Purpose. The Truth was, the greatest Part of those, who were very well aware of the Delufions of the popular System, and who had it in their Power, if they had been fo disposed, to have contributed greatly, to the undeceiving of Numbers of their rational Fellow-Creatures, in many Points

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The deplorable State of Men, in Confequence of their Polytheism, and Idolatry.

of

of the greatest Consequence, were so much interested in the Continuation of their Delufions, that the undeceiving of them, would have been one of the last Things, that they would have ever thought of. And as for some others, who were fufficiently qualified to have corrected most of the prevailing Errors, and to have led those, who were willing to have received their Instructions, to the Knowledge of the Truth, in the most important Articles of Religion, and who were under no Biass of Interest, which could have diverted them, from the benevolent Attempt; there were hardly any of them, notwithstanding this was the Case, who engaged in the Undertaking. They were, for the most Part, so apprehensive of the Danger of opposing established Opinions and Customs, generally deemed to be facred and divine; the most considerate of them, were likewise fo conscious, that they had not sufficient Autho-

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Authority, to make an Impression, on an inveterately prejudiced and corrupted Multitude, thinking, perhaps, that nothing less than an extraordinary Interpofition of God himself, would be effectual for that End; and fome others of them. had fuch a Notion of the Inconvenience of breaking in upon old Constitutions, however absurd and foolish they might have been, that they chose to let Things remain in the State in which they found them, without attempting an Alteration of the religious System, or a Reformation of the Morals of Men. They faw, that the Condition of Mankind, in general, was indeed pitiable; but they either took their Case to be desperate, or thought, that the proper Remedy, was too difficult, and too dangerous, to be administered by them.

If it should be asked, how it came to pass, that Mankind, who had sufficient Powers

How it came to pass, that Men fell into such a grosly ignorant and degenerate State, and continued in it so long.

Powers and Advantages, from the Constitution of their Nature, and their social Intercourse in the World, for arriving at the Knowledge of their Creator, and of his Will; for finding out the true Meafures both of their Duty, and of their Happiness; fell into such a grosty ignorant, degenerate, and miserable State, and continued in it for Ages, with much Patience and Refignation? Some very learned and ingenious Writers, have thought this to be so great a Difficulty, that for removing it, they have had Recourse to the Fascination, or Agency of evil Spirits, blinding the Understandings, and corrupting the Affections of Mankind. But without betaking ourselves to an Hypothesis, the Foundation of which is certainly precarious, the Answer to the Question in short is this; that the unhappy Event mentioned in it, was owing to the Inattention and Negligence of Men themfelves: They did not take heed to the **friking** Powers

striking Evidences, which every where occurred of the Being and Perfections of God, and to the clear Proofs of the other great Principles of Religion, and of their moral Duty; they did not exert with any Vigour, their intelligent and moral Faculties, in reflecting and reasoning on these most important and interesting Subjects: fo that, however sufficient these Faculties would have been, to have given them a true Information, in all the material Points of Religion and Morality, yet as they did not exercise and improve them, they were of no more Use to them for that Purpole, than the Eyes of a Man would be, for guiding him in a plain Road, after he had thrown Dust into them, or had wilfully that them up: They had contracted a Habit of thinking loofely and carelessly concerning God and his Worship, from whence, many Mistakes and Errors, from Time to Time, fprung; till at last they got into a Maze,

out of which, if they had been ever fo willing, they could not have extricated themselves, but with the greatest Difficulty. And this is the Refolution which St. Paul giveth us of the Case, agreeably to the Sentiments of Nature and Reafon; when he telleth us, that what was to be known of God, was manifest to the Gentiles; for God bad shewed it, unto For the invisible Things of bim, from the Creation of the World, are clearly feen, even bis eternal Power and Godbead; fo that they were without Excuse: Because that when they knew, or might have known God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkened: And even as they did not like to retain God in their Knowledge, God gave them up to vile Affections, and to a reprobate Mind, or to an untbinking undiscerntakes and Errors, from ing Mind. Wis and tog yads fiel as lis i gentle

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And if it should be farther asked, whether the Heathen Nations, after having fallen under such a stupid Infatuation, and fuch a gross Corruption as to Religion and Morals, were absolutely without all Resource and Remedy, necessarily shut up in a State of Darkness and Degeneracy, without any possible Means, so far as the Thing depended upon themselves, of escaping from it? For the Honour of human Nature, and in Justice to the Author of that Nature, it must be faid. that this was not the Case. In the lowest and most degenerate State, in which Mankind ever were, a Foundation was always laid for their Recovery, in the rational and moral Powers, which God had originally bestowed upon them. And if they had made the proper and becoming Use of these Powers, they would have been effectual, in the Height of their Degeneracy, to have diffipated the Mists of Ignorance and Error, in which felves

The Heathen Nations, in the Height of their Corruptions, not abfolutely without all Refource and Remedy. The Teather

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which they were involved and to have led them to a Discernment of the most important Truths of Religion, and to a just Sense of their moral Duty. It must, indeed, he owned, that it was hardly to have been expected, that any great Number of them, would have exerted their Powers, in fuch a Manner, as would have been necessary to have effected these Burpofes, in Opposition to the Prejudice and Corruption of their own Minds, the Influence of a bad Example every where around them, and that Torrest of Power which authorized and chablified the whole Mais of their Abjurdities and Six perstitions. Something might, certainly, have been done, by those who were senfible of the Mifery of their Condition and defirous of attaining to forme true Knowledge of God, and of the Duty which they owed to him; at least for rendering their State better tham it was and at the fame Time for making themdoider felves

selves acceptable to their Maker and Governor, who would have made Allowances for the Unhappiness of their Situation, and would not have expected a higher Degree of Reformation from them, than the Circumstances, in which they were, would have fairly admitted of. And from this Beginning, fomething more extensive of the same Kind, might possibly in Time have proceeded. However it is notifto be thought, that the good Effect of the best Endeavours, of a few Individuals, blind and ignorant themfelves, and neglected and massififeth by the more knowing of their Fellows; would, in this Affair, have been great, or confiderable. It therefore pleased God, to take the Re-chablishment of Religion upon a rational Footing and the Renovation of the moral World, into his own Hands, which he effected by his own Power, in Opposition to all the Prejudices and Corruptions of particular Men, and to the whole comand bined

Of the Improvement and Reinforcement of Religion by the Cologion by the Cological by And this bringeth as, to the Confideration of the Improvement and Reinforcement, which Religion hath received, bfrom the Revelution of the Cofpel.

Of the Improvement and Reinforcement of Religion by the Gospel.

do Goth who, from the Beginning fores faw, that Mankind, lafter a Course of many Ages, would fall into a State of great, and almost vaniverial Agnorance and Contuption, from which, the greatest Part of them, would find oit extremely difficult to recover themselves; half well teitmined, flat the proper Time to inter pole for their Deliverance a Von prepare the Way for this great Revolution in the Condition of Men, he had thought fit de fundry Times, and in doverfe Attonners, to make fome Discoveries of his Wind and Will, to particular Perfons, among the ancient Patriarche ; vand ufterwards oth give an inthe Scheme of Infliction of Religion, to one whole Nation, by Moss bonid and

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and the Prophers, Several Things in which, clearly phinted at mand had a Reference to a more perfect Institutions which hwat afterwards to reake Placeom Alocordingly; in the Falles of Timer God fent firth his Son, das the Minister of this mow and most gracious Diffentation, which instead containeth whe most bexcellent and complete Scheme of Religion; that was exer made known to Meh, and which hath given thein the utmost Advantages, that they will ever attain to for becoming virthous and happy The Revolution of the Goipel, after removing the Rubbish, which the Negligences and Diforders of Men, had thrown upon Religion; of after calling Mankind off from the Idohatries and Superflitions, which prevailed to amiverfally among the Gentiles, and that merely external and superficial Shew of Piety and Righteousnels, with which the Jews, for the most Part, contented themselves, hath promulgated the whole religious general L 2

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religious and moral System of Nature, and hath profecuted and urged the great End of it, most strenuously and effectually; much more fo, than any Scheme of Philosophy, or System of Religion, had ever done and That the Gospel hath the fame End, with that of the Religion and Law of Nature, the Improvement of Men in all Virtue, or, the raising them up to the highest Degree of spiritual Perfection, and of moral Excellence, of which they are capable, must be evident to all, who have ever confidered it, with any true Judgment, or found Reflection. Other Ends and Views, have indeed been afcribed to our Saviour; but without Foundation, and very injuriously. For as this is apparently the great and ultimate Intention of his Institution, to which, all other Things in it, refer and tendy fo it is the only Intention that can be deemed worthy of him, in publishing a Religion, in the Name of God, for the religious general

general Benefit and Use of Mankind. A Religion, which carried on a different Defign, would not be accommodated to the Constitution of human Nature; and therefore could not, without Abfurdity, be supposed to proceed from the Author of that Nature. Belides, what Religion, which was not, in the Main, founded upon the common Perceptions and Feelings of the human Mind, with Respect to moral Goodness, or Excellence, and which did not purfue their Tendency and Direction, would be fo much as underflood, or comprehended univerfally by Mankind? Upon no Foundation, certainly, could it obtain their Esteem and Approbation. about mable in the Sight of this who is

Now this great End, the Gospel proimoteth, by the wisest and best Means, that have ever been proposed for effecting it; and such, as, if well improved, will certainly and easily bring it to pass.

The Means, by which the Gospel promoteth the Improvement of Men in Virtue.

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First.

First, by laying before us, the most lively Representation of the Worth and Importance of Virtue, or of moral Goodness: as being of the highest Excellence in itfelf, a Transcript of the Purity of God, in partaking of which, we partake in some Degree, of his divine Dignity and Glory; and as being the only Thing of real Price and Estimation with him, and the alone Means of obtaining his Favour. And by giving us, on the contrary, the most awakening Description of the Baseness, and malignant Consequences of Vice, as being the Stain and Corruption of every intelligent Being who is habituated to it, the Discase and Death of a rational Spirit, a Thing altogether detestable and abominable in the Sight of him who is the original Excellence and Purity, and which necessarily excludeth from all happy Intercourfes and Communications with him, Which Representations, if duly attended to, cannot but greatly en-Firft, liven

The Means, by which the Coopel promonth the improvement of Men in Virue. liven and invigorate our natural Perceptions and Sentiments of Good and Evil, of moral Excellence and Deprayity, and increase our Desire and Love of the one, and our Distaste and Hatred of the other,

and who will render to them, hereafter, For the same Purpose, the Gospel exhibiteth to us; the most affecting and interesting Account of the Character of God: as the originally existing Being, of subom, and through subom, and to whom are all Things: the Fountain of all Life and Activity, of all Wildom, of all Virtue, and of all Perfection; having in himself, all the Excellencies and Beauties, which we admire in other Things, in the most sbfolute and perfect Manner; as being the plone Creator, Proprietor, and Lord of the Universe, who is particularly, the indulgent and merciful Father of the human Kind, whom he created at first, out of pure Goodness, and whom he still conchinneth in Beingorthet he may do them good, L 4 the

good, and upon whom he is always actually pouring his Beneficence; and who is at the same Time, their holy and just Governor and judge, who observeth their Conduct, as reasonable moral Agents, and who will render to them, hereafter, according to their Deeds, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil. Than which Account of the fupreme Being, containing the Sum of all the wifest Apprehensions, which Mankind have ever had concerning him, separated from all their Mistakes, nothing, furely, can be better calculated, for touching all the most powerful Principles in the human Heart, and making us, from a Veneration of the highest Perfection, from a Love of Virtue, from Gratitude and Generolity of Spirit, from a Defire of the most solid Praise and Honour, from a Regard to our own highest Good; in thort, from every ingentious and rational Motive, to act agreeably to (Loog the

the Law of our Nature; to pursue that Course of Life, which our Creator and Governor hath marked out to us, and required from us, and which is absolutely necessary to our Acceptance with him.

well-known that the hered Rites and

For carrying on the fame most excellent Defign, the Improvement of Men in all Virtue, the Gospel hath adopted and established all the great Laws of universal Righteousness, which have their Foundation in the Constitution of Nature, and hath indeed laid the greatest Stress on the Practice of the Duties required by these Laws; declaring it to be the Sum and Substance, the Completion and ultimate End of all true Religion. And befides the great moral Virtues required by the Gospel, it hath likewise wisely appointed a few politive external Duties and Rites. which are plainly subservient to its main Intention: Something of this Sort. feemeth to be necessary in every Religion, . Mon. both

both for continuing and propagating the Profession of it, and for conveying the Doctrines and Principles of it, with a stronger, and more lively impression, into the Minds of Men. But it is very well known that the facred Rites and Customs of the Heathers, instead of ferving the Interest of true Religion, were, perhaps, in most Instances, the Means of prejudicing and obstructing it, or of promoting the very Reverle of it. Nor can it be denied, that the Ceremonies and Forms of the Yews, however originally well intended, did always by their Multiplicity and great Variety, too much engross the Minds, and engage the Attention of that People, and came at last, almost to thut out all folid Piety and Goodness from among them. But the positive and ritual Precepts of Christianity, are but few, and require only Things simple and easy, and wifely calculated, for raising the Minds, and firengthening the Affections of weak Men, both

Men in the Centemplation and Pursuit of Virtue; and which oil ruled, according to the natural and true Intention of them, must always have a happy, Insurence for these Purposes of constitue Affile and the constituence.

to give Succels to our own Endeavours in

Again, the Gospel, for making Mainkind, univerfally and eminently pure and holy, hathrexacted Obedience to his Laws, by the most powerful and interrelling Confiderations prinot only by the Several Motives, which the Light of Nature offereth for exciting us to the Practice of Virtue; but by opening a new, and most wonderful Dispensation of Grace and Love, in the Redemption of Mankind, by the Incarnation, Obedience, Sufferings and Death of Jefus Christ; by giving us the most free and full Offers of Pardon and eternal Happines, upon the Conditions of Reportance and new Obedience, in a Manner, most fuited to remove the Bodings and Suspicions of

our guilty Minds, and to make us acquiesce, on our complying with the Conditions, in the most firm Hope of these Bleffings; by promiting to us expresly a divine Affiftance, to co-operate with, and to give Success to our own Endeavours in Virtue; likewise by exhibiting to us, a familiar, and most alluring Example of perfect Virtue, din bour own Nature; moreover, by granting us an Affurance of another Life, much stronger than the Suggestions of Nature could afford, and by giving us, even an Earnest and Pledge of it, in the Refurrection and Ascension of our Saviour; and finally, by difplaying the most folemn and awful Scenes beyond the Grave; the Refurrection of the Dead; the general Judgment of the World; the equal Distribution of Rewards, and Punishments, to the Rightsous, and to the Wicked; the Confummation of the moral Plan of the Universe; bushove the Bodings and Suspicions of

rayo, sutrity to adamin'T lend and bne State of fublime Dignity and Excellence, and of immortal Giory and Frappinch, which, by the Favour of cur Creator, nois

Thus is the Golpel most admirably calculated to be a Revival and Re-establishment of true Religion in the World. Laying its Foundation in the Constitution of Nature, and proceeding on the Plan exhibited there, for purifying the Faculties and Affections of Mankind, and raifing them up to eminent Degrees of Piety and Goodness, it hath nobly supported and secured, and greatly strengthened, enlarged, and improved that Plan; and if firmly believed, as it will most probably be, by all good Men, who feriously and diligently inquire into the Nature of it, and the Evidences which fupport it, cannot fail to animate us exceedingly in the Performance of our Duty, and to help us on, towards that State

State of sublime Dignity and Excellence, and of immortal Glory and Happinels, which, by the Favour of cur Creator, we

Thus is the Colpet most admirably calculated to be a Revival and Ke-eflabliftment of true Religion in the World. Laying its Foundation in the Conflitution of Nature; and proceeding on the Plan exhibited there, for purifying the Faculties and Affections of Manicind, and raising them up to eminent Degrees of Picty and Goodness, it hath nobly supnorted and secured, and greatly strengthened, enlarged, and improved that Plan; and if firmly believed, as it will most probably be, by all good Men, who ferioully and diligently inquire into the Nature of it, and the Evidences which support it, cannot fail to animate us exeedingly in the Performance of our Duty, and to help us on, towards that Stote

herence to the Difocurie, to point out the general Hoads of Argument, for the Truth and Hrtairy A Ac queral Prin-

ciples of natural Religion; the Being and dence of the Of the Evidences of natural and revealed signand Religion in general, with a Joint Review of fine of the hast material Objections, which have been unged ugainst them. and to avoid the other. And though

SBBALL not enterdar into the argumentative Part, sowflay dong the prot ducing the Evidences, either for natural or revealed Religional Thefe have been laid before the World, by many Writers of diffinguished Abilities and Merit, fo copiondy niandi fully, that hardly any Thing can be added to what they have faid! And the Ripedicio of the first to dwell of Things, which have been often propoled to great Advantage, would be only tedious and disgusting to an intelligent Reader. In the former Part, it was necesfary, for giving some Consistency and Co-Dever herence

Of the Evidence of the natural Religion.

herence to the Discourse, to point out the general Heads of Argument, for the Truth and Certainty of the feveral Principles of natural Religion; the Being and Principles of Attributes of God, the Reality of the Difference between moral Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice, and of the Obligations which we are under, to practife the one, and to avoid the other. And though what was faid to illustrate and confirm these Principles, was but Thort and general, yet it, as it is prefuned, may be fufficient to gain the Affent of attentive and candid Inquirers to them, or at least to lead them into fuch a Train of Reflection and Reasoning, as will, in the End, make them to acquiecce in a firm Conviction and Belief of the Truth of them. The Proofs of the Existence, and Perfections of the Deity, are indeed firmle and easy; but at the same Time abundantly fatisfying and convincing. The fame Reasoning used in analogous Cases, never

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never faileth to darry Conviction in it; and therefore Mould be conclusive with all inguitous and fair minded Perfors, in this For male ner the Man, who upon feeing forme igrand Building, and the Blegance, Proportions, Convenience, and Apritiduof all its Paris, immediately Inferreth of Builder, and his great Ability and Skill as an Architect of orboto, from viewing a fine Pictore, is finished Piges of Sculpture of any curious Machines inflintly knoweth, that fome ingenious Agrills were the Authors of them, must not luch a Man, upon contemplating the Universe, and its wondrous Beauty and Order, with all the Marks of endless Wildom, Defign, and Power which are to apparein the life decognize an original drinking Mind, and most intelligent, wife, and posteriol Agent, bas the Contriver and Former of ist Mattenetibe, who from a phodeni and just Occomony in a Patrily of the la contant Care to provide which M for CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY

its Necessities, and proper Rules laid down for the orderly Behaviour of its feveral Members, concludeth, that there must be some wife and good Father, of Head of it; or who, from the good Constitution of a Society, from excellent Laws taking Place in it, for the Protection and Encouragement of Honesty and Virtue, and the Restraint and Discouragement of Iniquity and Vice, and an equitable and impartial Administration of all public Affairs, affureth himself of a righteous Magistracy presiding and governing in it; must not the Person, I fay, who draweth these Inferences, which are very just, infer likewise from the Provifion, which is vifibly made for the Support and Welfare of all fenfitive Creatures; from the Abilities, with which Men are furnished, for rendering themfelves, and one fanother, happy , from their focial Connexions, from the Power of Conscience; and the Law of Virtue. which rot M

which we are naturally under; that there is an univerfal Parent of Nature, a most indulgent and gracious Father of the human Kind, a righteous and holy Governor of moral Agents? He, who can eafily account for the ordinary Effects of human Power and Art, by refolving them into their proper Causes, and yet refuseth to ascribe the grand and most surprising Appearances of the Universe, to the Agency of a divine Mind, the only adequate Cause of them, either falleth far short of his usual Capacity and Penetration, in judging of this most important Article, or rather is defective in that Honesty and Impartiality of Temper, which, it highly becometh us, to carry along with us, in all our Researches and Inquiries, and is, in every Case, a necesfary Qualification for our attaining to the Knowledge of the Truth, I know, that Attempts have been made, to perplex and obscure, even this most clear and fatisfactory M 2 Hers

fatisfactory Reasoning, for the Being and Attributes of God, by Subtilities, and strained Hypotheses, which could here enter into any plain unprejudiced Understanding, and upon which, more of a found Judgment, will ever lay any Weight. The Truth is, Nature itself controlleth and over-ruleth all Objections to such Argumentation, and determineth us to rest, notwithstanding any Surmises to the contrary, in the Conclusions which it affordeth, without Hestation.

And when we are once affured of the Existence of God, and know what Perfections belong to him, the Doctrine of his universal Providence, and his moral Government of Men, must be of Course admitted; as in Consequence of the Powers and Perfections, which he possesses, he both can, and must, take Cate of the World, which he hath made;

tion, in judging of this mon important

and inspect particularly the Affairs of Mon, and make them to feel the Effects of his Favour, or Condemnation, as their Conduct is good, or evil, in his Eyes.

tices, which it gives us of Good and And sa to the natural Difference be primary, and most strict, Obligation which we are under ite adhere to the one, and to guard against the other; the Evidence of these Points, doth not depend to much upon any Reatoning, as upon our intimate Consciousness, and Attention to our inward Feeling and Expegienceno It is plain, from what hath been already faid, that we are born with a Sense of Good and Eyil, of Virtue and Vige of moral Boauty and Deformity; that our Consciences very readily point out, and diffinguish the respective Objects of our moral Approbation or Condempation; indeed as clearly and certainly, as our external Senses discern their pro--əmmi M 3 per

per Objects, and affure us of a Difference between any of them, and their Contraries. It is likewife evident, that the Principle of Conscience, along with the Notices, which it gives us of Good and Evil, conveys to us, a concomitant Sense of Duty, or of Obligation; that, without attending to the abitract Natures and Relations of Things, Without any fublic Inquiries, and tedious Deductions, it immediately, and authoritatively, pronounceth the Things, which it approves, to be Right; and those which it disapproves, to be Wrong; and makes us to feel, that we are to practife the one Kind, and to avoid the other; infomuch, that we cannot act contrary to its Dictates, without breaking the Tenor and Harmony of our Minds, and falling into a State of Self-Condemnation, Remorfe, and Fear. Some Endeavours, have been. indeed, used, to mislead, or deceive us, even in these Points, where we have an imme-

immediate Peeling, and intuitive View of the Truth : But the most plausible Suggestions to this Purpose, have been before fufficiently obviated, in effablishing the Authority of Confeience, as the Light and Guide of Life, and in the wings its Dictates to be the Source, from whence our first Idea of Duty, or of moral Oblifuch a State, is clear and chairs, noing have already feen, from the apparent In-

10 And as to the Arong additional Obligations, which we are under to perform our moral Duty; particularly, white arising from the Confideration of wthe Existence of God, and of a future State of Rewards, and Punishments; the Proofs of them, are fo very clear and full, that they cannot but be convincing to all, who impartially confider, and examine them. For, if God, a Being perfectly wife, powerfull gracious just, and rightenus lexisteth; and that he doth, call Natisteileries caloud; he must necessarily be engaged on the Side rof nVirtue, vand vagainfle Vice fly he must M 4

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must be the Patron and Protector of good Men, even fin this World! having his Eye continually upon them, or ordering mid disting whatever befallethe them to their final, and their greatest Good; and he must be their Prosector and Friend, Aill more semankably, in a furtide State a Forthative are defined for fuch a State, is clear and carrain, as we have already feen, from the apparent Inecitions of God, in the Constitution of human Nature, and the Confideration of his own perfect moral Character, And if we have a clean Prospect of this States in which the onbral Administration of God 9 in the tother diniffering where Athe Triumph bef good Men, thall be donplace, and fullibly their rectiving all the highest Marks of the divine Approbation and Faviour y land the Candition of the Bird fallation dendered most deployable. by the indiction of a most severe ibut righteous Punishment ripon them; at must, sirely, if we have any ingenuous. Dum

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or any rational Principles in us, take, the fallest Hold of us, and most powerfully engage us to a Penformance of the Putt which improvesquired from a sowbish is the only Foundation on which, we can expect to be admitted to any Share of future Glory and Happiness, and to escape from the most insupportable Inof the Eri. I Let us proceed nonversity bas tons

little the Evidences of revealed Religion. Thus the Evidences of the general Principles of natural Religion, appear to tural Religion be wory frong and condusive van Their Principles, and indeed the genuine Sent mente of Nature itself fpringing up unavoidably in the Mind, as foon as me give event a limella Attention to the Evidense subjects supported them allowed of them almost spantaneously to They have shoul the Exemination of all Times and Acres: they have been in form Mathemat leaft, edmitted by the greetefhillerte of Mensiby the Wiles and most Knowing. .dimT

The Evidences of navery firong

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as well as by the more Ignorant and Rude, in all Nations; they have been difbelieved, or doubted of, only by fome of the most minute and contemptible Philesophers, and can hardly be rejected by mys who inquire into them, with Diligenee, and an Impartiality of Mind. escape from the most insupportable In-

dences of revealed Reli-

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dences of na-

Of the Evi- Let us proceed now, to confider a little the Evidences of revealed Religion. gion. There are only two Religions, at this noiside A laur Day known in the World, which feem to eines bas have any just Claim to be of a divine Original and Inflitution; the Jewift, and the Obiffin . The first was appointed to ferre diverse important Purposes of Providence, during on long Courle of Time, and particularly, are introduce in the due Sealon, a far more fublime and perfect Scheme of Religion, under the Dipental tion of the Meffat. The former Inftinition plainly referreth to the latter ; and the duter in general prestippeles the ast, force in the East was a sur-Truth,

Truth, and divine Original of the former bears Witness to, and confirms its Authority. There are, undoubtedly, feveral direct Proofs, and ftrong Prefumptions of the Truth of the Religion of Moses and the Prophets, both internal, and external; antecedently to the Sanction, which it receives from Christianite: But as I mean not to be tedious, I shall not here at all touch on these, but shall think it enough, to give a brief Sketch of the principal Evidences of Christianity, which, if once confirmed as it avoweth the Claim of the frwift Institution, will fufficiently establish and himself and of his Providence i milition

Proofs of the Truth of the Christian Inthings of the Utility, or Advantage of it.
Por if it thould be found to be of no Moment, or Significancy, which its Advaraghed

Pay Land whither in their Hower he both

Of the Utility of Christianity.

faries wontend is the Cafe, it could there be supposed to have a perfectly wife and good Being for its Author. But who, that is really acquainted with the Inflitte tion of our Saviour, and knoweth what the State of Mankind was, with Respect to Religion and Morals; before his Cominglinte the Worlder can, diconfiftently with any Appearance of Truth alld Gaindour, fay that Christianity is of nothinpertance God, indeed; by the common Voice of Nature and Reafon, speaks wery diffinity and intelligibly to all Ministry a Eight should with their Minds, he allebeen de wish the Knowledge of himself, and of his Providence; randichy his Law written in their Hearts, he both fratincuithem in their Duty, and abligisabilitato perform iter And if they bad made the good life; which thepimisht have made of their minural Bowers and -Advantages, they would, himshinly, have -become igreat Proficientation the Knowfaries ledge

Of the Utility of Christianity.

but a sad bis

ledge and Practice of those Things, which tended to the true Perfection and Happiness of their Nature. But, furely the Man, who hath the justest Notion of the Importance and Force of the Powers of human Nature; who is perfuaded of their Sufficiency to make those, who duly cultivate and improve them, wife and good; who knoweth, that they have actually enabled forme, to arrive at a great Height of spiritual and moral Perfection; and have always preferved fome Knowledge of the fundamental Points of Religion, and prorinced feveral Acts of Virtue, even in the greatest Part of Men; must, yet, be sensible, if he is acquainted with the History of the World, and made any just Resections upon it, that through the Instruction and Inadvertence, the Diforders and Corruptions of Mankind, these Powers have never been sufficient for the Infruction and Direction of the gree Body of Ment in the Principles of Religion, doidy of

Religion, and the Conduct of a good Life; and that from a full Experience of their Infufficiency for these Purposes, the wifest and best Men among the Heathers, were deeply fenfible of the Want of forme more authoritative, and more effectual Method of informing and disciplining the Minds of the Multitude, than any that they could find in contemplating the Syftem of Nature. Now fuch an Inflitution as these Persons wanted, and as all who defire the universal Reformation and Happinels of Mankind, must be most folicitous about, and which it was, furely, very worthy of God to grant to Men; supposing the Pretentions of our Saviour, to a divine Authority, to be well founded, we have in the Gospel: As must be very plain; from what was before fald, to thew that the Institution of our Lord, is most admirably calculated, to support and strengthen, to improve and enlarge that Scheme of Religion and Morality, Religion which

which hath its Foundation in Nature indeed to carry that Scheme to the highest Perfection; to fet the original Principles of it, in a clear and friking Light, to give an additional Authority and Weight to its Precepts, and to adapt it much better, than it was ever adapted before, to the general Use and Practice of the World! Certainly, none who confidereth this, can ever fay, that Christianity is of no Utility, nor a Thing altogether wain and superfluores ! On the contrary, it may be juftly accounted, the liffect of the tendet Menoy and Love of God to Mankind and the greatest Bleffing, that could have Invention of aments and used beworked and trary, he will be apt to conclude, that a

The direct and politive Evidences of The direct the Truth and divine Original of this Religions shall snows be briefly proposed. These have been commonly distinguished into the internal, and external Proofs of Christianity of The internal broofs were heavenly brought

Evidences of the Truth of Christianity; and first of the internal.

brought chiefly from the Excellence and Subliming of our Saviour's Doctrine And indied to a Man, who examineth the Institution of our Lord, with a fair and upright Mind; with a findere Leve of Truth sant Virtite, the every Delign which is to confpletious in it, of endow ing Mankind with all morally good Qualities, and even with the highest Degrees of them, with the admirable Contrivance of all the under Parts of it, for promoting and forwarding this grand Intention; will he a firing Recommendation of it is and a Things which will hardly questallow him to think, that it doubt have been the Invention of an Importor: On the contrary, he will be apt to conclude, that a Religion, which favours nothing of this World, but which deligns to raise us far above it, above all, that is base and vile, fordid and low in it; which tendeth to exalt us, above the ordinary State of Humanity, and to infuse into us something heavenly brought

The direct Evidences of the Truth of Christianity; and first of the interpal. heavenly and divine; to actuate us by the mobilest Principles and to make us eagerly to affire to the highest Perfection of our Kinds, is worthy of proceeding from the Fountain of Light Punity, and Goodness; and will readily affent to what the Author of this Religion himself hath declared that his Destring was not bis, but the Fountains was not be fountained with the Fountained w

Power of all Luman linagination and Fic-Under this Head of the internal Evidences of Christianity's being a divine Revelation, the Character of our Lord himself, as delineated in the New Testamens, and the Characters and Lives of fome of his Apostles, or first Ministers, es described there, may be justly brought into Confideration, as affording very firing Arguments for the Truth and divine Institution of the Gospel. For if these Characters, particularly the Characters of our Saviour, and of St. Paul, be true and genuine; if they have been taken N himmelf

taken from real Life; the necessary Confequence" is, that Christianity must be true, oand of a divine Original. And what Reafon is there to call the Gennine ness and Reality of them into Question? That of our Saviour himfalf, is to extra ordinary and peculiar, though there le nothing in it, in the least shocking to Reason, that it seemeth to be above the Power of all human Imagination and Fiction, most certainly, it was quite above the Invention of the Perfors, who have delivered it to us; and is what, one may prefume to fay, they, with all their Pred judices about them, would not have received, or believed to be true, if it had been invented, and offered to them, by others. And if any Man will take it upon him, to fay, and fland to it what the Account which we have of St. Paul from his own Speeches and Writings, and other Parts of the Hiftory of the New Teltament, is not true, he will foon find taken himfelf

himself involved in Difficulties, far superior to any that he would meet with, in supposing the Account, which we have of that very extraordinary, and remarkable Person to be just, and in admitting att the Confequences of that Supposition. But I than go no farther into thele Arguments, as they have been of late very juffly flated and illustrated, by force very didicious and able Writers . was and able Impolition, in the Performance of them

But the most direct, and the most uni- Of the exterverlally latisfying Proofs of the divine Authority of Christianity, are those fo-Jehin Atteffations, Which were externally given by Heaven, to the Million of our Saviour. First, in a long Series of ancient Prophecies, all centering in him and pointing him out as the Melliah, or that great and illustrious Perfoll, by whom given to them; which was finally to fix

See Lord Lyteleton's Confiderations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, and the late Dr. Duchal's Sermons on these Subjects. Carrics

nal Evidences of Christianity.

Of the exter-

of Christia-

nity.

God was to open a new and most perfect Dispensation of Religion, and to fet up a Kingdom, uplich is not to be destroyed. Secondly, in the Miracles, which he wrought, during his Ministry; which were so various and numerous, so great and aftonishing, and so open and visible arguing that he had the Command of all Nature, and thewing at the fame Time. that he was conscious of no Deceit, or Imposition, in the Performance of them, that is hardly to be conceived, that an ingenuous honest Mind could attend to them, without confolling, as we find one Eye-Witness of them, did confels, that no Man could do the Miracles robich be did, except God was with him. Thirdly, in his Refurrection from the Dead, to which, our Saviour referred the Jews, as the last Sign, which should be given to them; which was finally to fix his Character, and to decide the Truth of his Pretentions; and which indeed carries God

carries such a Demonstration of the Pinger of God in it, that every Man, who admitteth the Fact, must become a Difciple of our Dord, and acknowledge, dist God was in him, of a Trueb. Fourthly, in the Spirit of Prophecy, which appeared to be in him, in many eminent, and most wonderful Inflances; by which, he not only foretold to his first Disciples, several surprising and unexpected Things, which were food to happen; and which, he faid, be rold them of, before they came to pass, that when they and come to pass, they might believe; but fikewife predicted feveral grand and amazing Events and Revolutions, which Were not to happen for many Years afterwards, which yet all came out in Time, in a most exact Agreement with the prophetic Account, which he had given of them: Which Account, therefore, he could have given, according to the common Sense of Men, as well as the N 3 express

express Opinion of the ablest Sect of the Philosophers*, neither by Nature, nor by Art, but only by the Inspiration of God. Laftly, in the Effusion of the Holy Spirit, upon his Apostles, and first Ministers, in Consequence of the Promise, which he had made to them; which en, abled them, to do the fame, or even greater Miracles, than he himself had done; and to foretell forme most fignal, and very distant Events, the like of which, had never happened from the Beginning of the World, and probably will never happen again, which were not only above all the Forelight of Men, but above all their Conceptions and Imaginations, till certain corresponding Facts, convinced the Wife and discerning Part of them. of the Truth and Accomplishment of the Prophecy; and, which also enabled

of them: Which Account, therefore, he could have given, according to the com-

N 3 express

them to preach the Religion of our Saviour, and to affert his Authority, with a Wisdom, Spirit, and Resolution, which no Opposition could overcome, or resist. All which extraordinary Facts, depend upon the strongest historical Evidence, an Evidence much stronger than that, upon which we easily believe other Facts. or the Narrations of them, when they are not contradictory or impossible; and indeed every way fufficient to weigh down the natural Improbability of them, on Account of their being fo unufual and extraordinary: Besides that they verified by some remarkable consequential Events, in the Ages immediately following, in the surprising and glorious Progress of Christianity, spreading itself quickly through all the most famous Countries of the Earth, gaining an infinite Number of Converts of all Ranks and Conditions, triumphing over the Rage of Persecution, and what was still more uncon-Time,

inconquerable, over the Prejudices and evil Paffions of Mankind; and are Will verified in Part, by some astonishing Events before our Eyes, in the present State and Circumstances of the World. These are such Proofs of the divine William of our Saviour, as can hardly fail to have a great Effect on a Lover of Truth and Virtue, and determine him, to acknowledge and receive our Lord, as a Teacher, and a Lawgiver, sent by God; as a Person, whom the Father bath fealed; to whom, therefore, he is to give all possible Attention, Submission, and Obedience.

Thus I have given a fuccinct Account of the Evidences both of natural, and of revealed Religion. And though it containeth but a very small Part, of what may be urged in Support and Defence of them; yet, it is presumed, that it may be sufficient for the Conviction of the most able and sagacious, if, at the same

Time,

Time, attended and fair Inquirers; at leak, that it will afford to wiew of Atha they and Candour thich air Opening of the Foundamer, on which Religion Rands; as will chable their to purple any faring Inquires which they may make concerns ing them, with Fatelity and Successive But String Level a le saturi The flourte de ler them be ever to clearly and fully effabriffed, are Hable to be objected to 7 to, of the Ob. many Objections have been offered against jections to Religion. both the Religion of Nature, and that of Revelation. I do not mean, fo much as to the min the far giventer Part of thele do ma Objections: They are indeed to fivelous of an another and triffing, that they are beneath a labofield, is difficult Referention; hot can any Manuel telerable Capacity and Refection, which is acquainted with the Nature of Religion, and the Poundations, on which it standeth, be ever in the least effected, or inoved by them." But as forme Objections of real Weight, have

been urged against Religion, and as some others, which have been offered against it, have fo much Plaufibility, as fometimes to disturb and perplex some upright and ferious Inquirers into the Principles and Evidences of it; it may be of Ufe. to review the most material of these Objections, and to take off their Force, fo far as is necessary to render the Minds of plain honest Men, who are in Earnest in the Bufiness of Religion; secure, and easy in the Belief and Practice of it. Hand Reveletion. I do not mean, it much as

iccion from ing free Agents.

Of the Ob.

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The first Ob- First, one formidable Objection, as it sen's not be is thought to be; which is urged with a Defign to subvert all Religion, or to Thew it to be a Thing impossible in Men, is brought, from our natural State, and Condition, as having no Liberty in acting, and as being under the constant Influence of Fate, or Necessity. This, the Persons who make the Objection, alledge must be the Case; as our Conduct al-

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ways dependeth on certain Causes, and Motives, not in our own Power, which uniformly and invariably produce their Effects; so that we cannot act otherwise than as we do. To speak of Religion to Men, therefore, fay they, must be wholly Impertinent; who, as they have no Freedom of Action, can never be the Subjects of Religion, being incapable both of Virtue, and of Vice, and being in no Case, intitled to Praise and Reward, or liable to Blame or Punishment. And sall bare non to give a more effectual Blow to Religion, some urge this Matter a great deal farther; that as the Actions of Men are equally necessary with the Motions of Matter, there must be a continued Chain of necessary Causes, from the Creator of the Universe, the original Cause of all Things, to the lowest Act of every individual, Man., It must, therefore, be plain, that there can be no Religion; at least there can be nothing excellent, or valuable. noinh

valuable, in what is called by that Name, in the Estimation of God himlelf, who, as far as appeareth, is as much pleased with the contrary, as he is with it; nay, who must be deemed, as he is the first Mover of the great Machine, to be strictly the Author of whatever is called Sin, Vice, and Wickedness, among Men.

This Objection one of the main Forts of Infidelity.

This is one of the main Forts of Atheism and Insidelity, whither their Votaries, after being beaten out of some other untenable Posts, retire, and where they can lit down securely, as they think, and bid Desiance to all Opposition.

Let us, however, confider a little, the Justinels and Strength of this Reasoning, and whether it be really so destructive to Religion, as it is pretended to be. This Objection is founded on the Supposition,

fition, that Man is not a free Agent. To proceed more diffinally in answering it. let us confider what is meant by faying that he is not a free Agent. Is it that he is not capable of Chufing and Willy ing? This I think will hardly be af The first Part firmed. But if he is capable of Choice tion answered. and Volition, he is free, as the Idea of thefe, importeth his Freedom, or his acting without Confraint on any Force whatfoever upon him. For Liberty, it must be observed, standard in Opposition only to Configuint, or to brutal Impulse. and not to the Operation of rational Motives, which are very confishent with, pay, are necessary to our attaining to that State of Freedom, which is of the greatest Use and Advantage to us. In every uncontrouled Choice that we make and in every confequent Volition, the Freedom of human Nature, in forme Measure appeareth: But our principal Liberty confifteth in an Ability of acting, according to

of the Object

The first Part of the Object tion answered. our deliberate Judgment and Sense of what is right, and becoming us, without any Reftraint, Check, or Impediment Whoever reflecteth on the Confliction of our Nature, must foon be ferfible that fome Powers, or Principles in it, are evidently deligned for superintending and governing its other Principles that our Appetites and Paffions are naturally in a State of Subjection, while our Powers of Conscience and Reason, are advanced to the Scat of Authority's that the Judgment and Determination of thefe higher Principles, are most properly our Judgmeht and Choice? that confequently the truell Freedom of Men, confilteth in their being always able to act, as their Confeience and Reason, after ab mattire and impartial Confideration of Things, direct them, with perfect Complacincy; without being subject to any Hinderance, or Controul, either from the Motions of the inferior Principles and Dispositions TUO

of

of their Nature, or from the Influence of detward Officets, or Temptations Will any onerraffirm; that we have no fuch Ability line This would, certainly riber to contradict the Experience of Mankind, and particularly the Experience of good Men, who have it in the greatest Perfection owly nothers this Power is often greatly weakned and impaired, and fometimes, ima great Measure, dost, by their following the Motions of licentious Appetites and Paffions, in Opposition to the fettled Judgment of their governing Faculties, and to the Remonstrances, which they make against their evil Pursuits. But fo far as this is the Cafe, they lose their Liberty, and reduce themselves to a State of vile ignominious Drudgery, Still these Persons have it in their Power, to confider and reflect, to stop short in their miguided Course, and to fix their Attention on those Considerations, which are mole proper to reclaim them, from their Obfracles

their Licentioushess and to engage thene to those Virtues from the Brachice to which othe Strength and Freedom of the Sould immediately, flow. It will, how every I know, be faid; that in acting ace cording to the Determination of bur higher Faculties, with the most entire Approbation and Satisfaction, we are not free But here't would afk, lifthe Point of human Liberty was quite out of Difpute, if it was univerfally agreed, that Mankind are endowed with fuch a Powers or Principle; how could it discover it felf, but in their acting according to the Election and Determination of the commanding Faculties, in their Minds, with perfect Rafe and Pleasure; in pursiting that Course of Life, which their Conscience and Reason point out, and direct them to, as the Foundation of their fupreme Dignity and Happinels, with Spirit and Vigour, without being interrupted in their Courfe, or diverted from it, by any ribria Obstacle,

Obliade wor Temptation neither of from withing or without them? But though in acting thus owe imagine that we have Laberty, yet we shall be told that it is ionly an Appearance, or a deceitful Feelangulof at, that we have But wherein doth the Deceit of this Matter lie ? Are we deceived as to our having a Power of chusing, and determining; and of actling according to the Judgment and Determination of lone higher Powers? Or, as to but having a Power of furpending Action, if we think fit, and of deliberating and confidering Matters farther, till warare fure that we have got into a right Praintinof thes Truth and Reality of Itheles Afailities, awe have as much Evidenceriat we have of a Power of Thinklinguin us ord of any loft our internal mentations and Actions whatloever But out Chaires v Determinations od ad Judgment, niaocording to which the out, his is shids depend upod Caufes dant Motives, Power which

which are not under our own Power. which operate necessarily upon us, and inevitably produce their Effects. It is indeed not to be denied, that the great and ultimate Ends of all our Actions and Pursuits, are fixed in the Constitution of our Nature, about which we have no Power: and that our moral and rational Faculties, together with the common Feelings of the Heart, sindicate, and ascertain them to us: And if we will exert our intellectual Powers, in the Manner that becometh us, and which a Sense of the Importance of the Thing, must naturally excite us to do, they will furnish us, with fuch Reasons and Motives, for purfuing these great Ends of Life as will make our Endeavours for attaining to them, fugeelsful. But however true all this may be, and whatever Connexion there is between the Motives of Action. and the Acts, which we do in Confequence of them; still we find, that the Power daidw

Power of deliberating, chufing, and determining, is in ourselves; that we are properly Agents, or the Authors of whatever is done by us, for obtaining the Objects, or Ends of our Purfuits. And what other, or greater Freedom, need we be folicitous about? Would any Man defire to himself, a Liberty of acting with Indifference, as to all Reasons and Motives of his Conduct? Or, of acting independently on all Motives; or even in Oppofitten to the most rational Motives, with Pacility and Satisfaction of Mind? Would fuch a Privilege be worthy of a moral and rational Nature, or indeed confishent with the Constitution of it? However, therefore, fome Reasons, or Motives may be always affigned for our Actions let it fuffice that we are unider no Compulsion, or Constraint from them; but that we are still Masters of but own Conduct that we can reflect apon, and judge of the feveral Motives that 0 2 of

of Action, with which we are acquainted, reject those that are wrong, and act only from those that are right: And when we do fo, the more fleady the Influence, and the fronger the Efficacy of fuch Motives is upon us, it is so much the better; is we shall be thereby, more affinedly, brought to the highest State of Dignity, Freedom, and Happiness, of which we are capable; and shall make the nearer Approach to the Perfection and Liberty of God himfelf, who, though he is the most uncontroulable of all Beings, and can do whatever he pleafeth in Heaven, and in Earth; yet, from his own effectial Purity and Goodness, is not capable of Willing or doing any Thing, but what is in itself righto and agreeable to the supreme and immutable Excellence of his Nature in A der no Compulsion, or Conftraint from Now from this Review and Examination of the State of our inward Liberty J thinkly its must be fufficiently nevident 10 that 0 2

that nothing prejudicial to Religion, can be inferred, from any Defect, for Want of it in Men. However they may always act from fome Motives, as the Objection taketh Notice, and which indeed the Constitution of their Nature, requireth they should do; yet they are laid under no Necessity, from the Operation of these Motives, which excludeth their own Choice and Agency: They, notwithstanding, have still a Power over their Actions, and are, firially, the Authors of all the Good, or Evil, which is imputed to them. They are, therefore, plainly, the Subjects of Religion, capable of Merit, and of Demerit, and entitled to Praife and Reward, of hable to Blame and Pumilliment; and accordingly, are applauded, or condemned, both by themfelves, and by others, as they perform their Duty, or neglect it. If, indeed, we were under Confirmint, or a physical Necessity; if we were impelled by some from unnaunnatural Violence, which bore down our own Faculties, and superseded the Use of them; and which carried us, like Machines, we knew not whither, the Objection would stand in full Force, and it might justly be faid, that Religion was incompatible with fuch a Constitution. In this Case, the Practice of Religion would not be within the Sphere of our Activity, but would be quite beyond all our Abilities, if we could properly be faid to have any; and therefore could not be supposed to be required from us. But while we are under no Influence, but that of Motives, which are perfectly adapted to the Constitution of a reasonable and moral Being, which throw Light into the Understanding, at the same Time that they gently determine the Will; and while we find, that we ourselves, are still the Actors in the Production of the Effects, to which these Motives incline and urge us; the Influence of them, is fo far from -Ennu

from being destructive of Religion, that it feemeth to be altogether necessary to the Subfistence of it, in a human Mind; and the more uniformly and powerfully it operateth upon us, to the greater Eminence and Perfection in Virtue, will it in Time raile and advance us.

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And as to the other Part of the Object The fecond tion, that if Men act always from certain Objection an-Causes in Nature, which necessarily operate upon them, and unavoidably produce their Effects; there must be a continued Chain of necessary Causes, from the original great Cause of all Things, to the lowest Act of every Man: That, therefore, there can be nothing excellent, or valuable, in what is called Religion, in the Estimation of the Deity; fince for any thing that appeareth, he is as well pleased with the contrary, as he is with it; and must even be deemed, as he is the first Mover, and continual Sup-0 4 porter.

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porter of the grand Machine, to be firidly the Author of whatever goeth by the Names of Sin, Vicel and Wickedness among Men. To enter into a minute Refutation of this Objection, might run us into some most abstrufe Speculations, in Relation to the Prescience and Predeter mination of God. But I shall avoid all thefe, and only observe, what may be The fecond and sold enough, to obviate any Thing that is plaufible in the Objection; that as Men are under no Influence, or Necessity, if it must be called so, which is not perfectly confistent with their Freedom, and their being the proper Subjects of Religion, as is plain, from what hath been afready faid; and as both they themselves, and others, are very fentible of the Dignity, which the Principles of Religion, when they operate powerfully in their Flearts, confer on them; it would be extremely absurd to suppose, that the Deity himself, who hath planted this noble and geneporter rous

rous Sense of the Merit of moral Piety and Virtue, in the human Mind, should be ignorant of the Worth of that divine Conflithtion of Soul which true Religion formeth in those, in whom it effectually prevaileth. And let us farther take Notice that whatever Foreknowledge God may have of future Events, and whatever Foundation he may have laid, for all Things coming to pass, according to the Counfels of his own Will; yet, Mankind are not thereby thrown into the Hands of dny Thing, like an invincible, or und controulable Fate, on Deftiny : They find that they are always Masters of their own Acts; and when they have done amis, they are throughly conscious that they had a Power, as well as that it was their Duty to have acted otherwise; for which Reafon, they necessarily blame and condemn themselves, when they have done a plainly evil Thing Nor is God, to be at all confidered, as the Author intellithor of the Sins and Wickednesses, which they commit. He indeed thought fit, to create a great Variety of Beings; of very different Ranks, and Degrees of Perfection; and among them, to bring into Existence the human Species; who are endowed with some noble Faculties, and amiable Affections, but narrow and limited; and, who together with thefe, have feveral inferior Principles in their Constitution, which, interfering in their Operation, with their higher and better Powers, render them liable to Error, and a Depravity of Affection; in Confequence of which, they frequently fall into Vice, and transgress the Laws of their Maker. and righteous Governor. But the Vice. or Wickedness of Men, is not the End of the divine Constitution, or Appointment. The Thing ultimately intended by the Deity, is certainly the highest Order, and best State of the Universe: to which the Existence of such a Species of impersect rodi intelliintelligent Beings, as Mankind are, was necessary; fince without them, there would have been a Chaim, or Vacuity, in the Scale of Beings, afcending probably, in a just Gradation, from the lowest Animals, endowed with Life and Senfation, to the highest created Intelligences; all of them, being in a State, in which Happiness is prepollent, and which is greatly preferable to Nonexistence. And if fuch a Species, as Mankind are, was really wanted for the Plenitude and Order of the Universe, it was plainly worthy of the Wildom and Goodness of God, to create them, notwithstanding those moral Evils, which he foresaw they would fall into, in Consequence of the Imperfection and Frailty of their Nature: Which Evils, he in the mean Time, over-ruleth, and maketh fubservient to some very useful Purposes; while he likewise giveth us the clearest Demon-Aration of his Disapprobation of them, cife and

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and of their Contrariety to his Nature and Will; and hath also armed us with fufficient Power if we will but use it. for defending ourfelves, and guarding against them. It is plain, that the natural Evils which abound in the World give Scope and Opportunity to the Exercife and Cultivation of some of the most amiable Dispositions of Men; Sympathy, a Tendernels of Heart, Bounty, Liberality, in a Word to a generous Diffusion of Spirit in doing Good. And moral Evil, though a more untoward Appearance, yet hath opened a Scene for the Culture and Improvement of forme of the most transcendent and sublime Virtues: particularly for calling forth and increasing the Industry and Fortitude of Men, in fubduing the bad Habits which they have contracted, land recovering therafelves from the Dominion of Vice, and in forming and establishing the contrary Habits of Virtue in their Hearts; for the Exercife

cife of Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Forgiveness of Injuries; and hath made Way for the godlike Practice of returning Good, for Evil Some of the most honourable Professions of Men, owe their Being, to the Existence of moral Evil; without which, there would be no Room, or Occasion for them. To what a low State would the highest Kind of Philosophy, and Religion too, be reduced if the Care of moral Imperfections the expelling of Vine, and the ter plenishing of the Soul with Virtue, did not come within their Province? And what a Field, would Men of the greatest Abilities, and best Hearts, want, for occupying and displaying their Talents, if there was no inflaucting of the Jenorant, and non raclaiming of the Vicious in if there was packanverting of a Signer from the Error of his Ways, and no faving of a Soul from Death? It is certain, that these most divine Employments could have

no Place, if moral Imperfection, or Vice, was not permitted under the Government of God in this World. And while God thus extracteth Good from the Worlt of Evils, he, at the fame Time, giveth Men the clearest Notice of his utter Difapprobation and Diflike of them? by having implanted in their Minds, a quick benfe of the Deformity and Vile ness of all Vice, to that they cannot be hold it in its native Form, without deteAing it, and flying from it, as from righthir spectie, and by making theka to experience, and to feel it, to be the certain Source of Ruin and Milery to them in this Life; and by giving them alarming Pielages of more difficial and terrible Confeduences whom of, as In That which is to come. And hath moreover enabled them, by the moral Conflittetion, which he hath given them, by their Situation in the World, and by that Affistance, which they may always receive

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ceive from him, to avoid all moral Cormintions and Defilements, and to abound in all the contrary pure and excellent Qualities, God, therefore, cannot without the utmost Impropriety and Absurdity as well as Blafphemy, be faid to be the Author of the Sing or Wickedness, which Men commit; as it is so visibly contrary to the Defign of his Creation in them, and of his whole Administration towards them; which, indeed, he only permitteth to be in the World as the do made to Consequence of fuch la Constitution of Things as is upon the Whole most adapted to promote the general Good; Delty is made and of which, Men themselves, are properly the Authors, when in Opposition to the Dictates of the governing Faculties in their Minds, and to the Tendency of their best Affections, they follow the Motions of the lower Appetites and Paffions limetheir Constitution bol And thuis, St James's Resolution of this Case, must rection be

be allowed to be confonant to the Brins ciples of Reafon, and of found Philofophy. Let no Man fay, when the is tempted I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted to Evil, meither tempteth be any Man. But a Man is tempted, suben be is drawn away by his own Luft, and enticed : Then when Luft bath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin ; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death! towards them; which, indeed, he only

jections against Religion; and first that the very up of Inconfiftencies and Contradictions.

Of other Ob- and But to proceed to consider, dome other Objections against Religion PAgainst the very Notion of a Deity, it is arged that Deity is made it is made up of the confidencies and Contradictions; of Things which vare only the Figments not little. Brains, which rave mezer to be comprehended; of undetflood by Mengdanswering to which there istreally nothing in Nature, fuch as Incofficiety, Infinity, Elemity and the like: Ht Adothonot appear; that the nanprient Atheists were aware of this Objection

jection to the Existence of a Deity. There was nothing in the Ideas of Immateriality, Infinity, and eternal Duration, that was fo shocking, and overwhelming to their Minds. They did not, indeed, afcribe these Attributes to the proper subject of them; but they allowed them to be properties, which might really exist, and belong to some Substances, or Things. It was the wonderful Sagacity of a noted Leader in the Cavie of Infidelity, of the last Age, which found out the Objection; who, with a groffness of Imagination, beyond any thing of the kind, which had appeared in his Predeceffors, affirmed, that we have no Idea, or Conception of any thing; which doth not fall under our bodily Senses, nor any Evidence of the Existence of any Things, which doth not flow from the fame Sources: And as the Attributes of God in general, and particularly his Incorporeity and Infinity, are Things, of which

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The divine Attributes of Incorporeity, and Infinity, particularly objected to

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we have no fenfible Phantaims, or Perceptions, they must be altogether chimencal and fictitious. This is, tertainly, very poor Philosophy; which as it was not rehished, and did not indeed take Place, in ancient Times to neither will ait be approved of now, when every one, who is sicquainted but with the first Elements of Science, understandeth this a great deal of the most important Know--ledge which we have is conveyed into the Minds by very different Charmels, from those of the external Senses and that there are many objects, which are upon the whole, incomprehenfible by us, which are not altogether inconceivable, and unintelligible; of which we can acquire a true knowledge, as far as our faculties can go, in fearthing into them, without being ever able to penetrate fully into their Nature. This is plainly the Case, with respect even to the most invineluoirus ? comprehentible Attributes of the Deity, his Incorporeity, or Spirituality, his Immenfity,

mensity, Eternity, and the like: Things, which we can never fathom, but which must always vastly exceed our Comprehension; of which, however, we can form some true and real, though faint and inadequate Conceptions; and which, upon very just Grounds, as hath been already seen, we ascribe to God.

But it is farther urged, in regard to the Deity, that even his moral Attributes, his Holineis, Justice, and Goodness, are altogether inscrutable to us; as we have no way of judging of them, but from an Analogy to what we experience in ourselves, which is no way of knowing them at all; there being such an infinite distance and disparity between the Deity and us; and in arguing from which Analogy, we are chargeable with great Presumption and Impiety, in supposing, that there can be any thing in such low,

The moral Attributes of God objected to, as inscrutable to us. Istom so

to, as infernitable to us. despicable Creatures as we are, which can bear the least Resemblance to the Excellencies of the original all perfect Mind *. This is what hath been most strenuously urged by a late Writer, who, with indefatigable Zeal and Pains, hath endeavoured to explode the Principles both of natural and revealed Religion +. But why should it be affirmed, that the moral Perfections of God, are quite unfearchable by us? If we are capable of any clear and diffinct Notions of God at all, they feem to be the Notions which we have of his moral Character. As the Knowledge of his moral Attributes, is of the greatest Importance to us, so it is the most level and accommodated to our Apprehensions. We are indeed led into it. in a great measure, from an Attention to what appeareth to be most excellent and perfect in ourselves; which seemeth to

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[†] Lord Bolingbroke's Posthumous Works.

be the only Way, in which we can judge of the Dignity and Perfection, of any fuperior Natures. It is plain, that it is by looking into ourselves, that we get the first Idea of the Excellence and Perfection of a rational and moral Agent. In contemplating the Powers and Principles inherent in our Minds, we find that fome of them are of the greatest Importance, to the highest Improvement, and to the most pure, and lasting Enjoyment of our intelligent and moral Nature; fuch as the Power of Understanding, or our Faculty of apprehending and knowing Things; a Sense of Good, or of Evil, in our own Affections and Actions. and in those of other rational Agents, with a Determination to adhere to the one, and to avoid the other; and a Difposition to communicate Happiness, to maintain Right, Truth, and Equity in the World, and to promote and establish the Order and Peace of Society. These gree, Powers

Powers and Qualities inhepent in our Nature, are the Things, which eminently, distinguish us, from the other Beings of this World, and raise us far above them in Rank and Perfection. They feem indeed to be absolute Perfections in themfelves, calculated, not only to ferve the Purpoles of our present Existence, but to go along with us, into the highest Scenes, into which we shall ever pass; to be worthy likewife of the most exalted Spirits, and even necessary Ingredients in their Dignity and Happiness. Now from the Notions which we have of these Principles and Qualities in ourselves, and from our Sense of their Importance and Excellence, we are led naturally to infer, that they also belong to the higher Intelligences in the Universe, and even to the Original supreme Intelligence himfelf, who must be supposed to have, either these same Principles in Kind, though of an infinitely more exalted Den Powers gree,

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gree, or some Powers in him of a superior Nature, but analogous, or correspondent to them, which give him the most perfect Knowledge of all Things, the most clear and lively Views of the Dignity of Virtue, and of the Baseness of Vice, and the strongest and most fixed Determination to promote the Order and Happiness of the Universe. Nor do we proceed on a fallacious Ground, in judging thus of the Deity: On the contrary, the furest Way for our forming true and just Conceptions of his supreme Excellence, seemeth to be, to take our Rise from the Contemplation of those Things, which clearly appear to be absolute Perfections in ourselves, and in other Orders of intelligent Beings; to extend and enlarge our Ideas of them, to seperate from them all Defects and Limitations; and then to ascribe them, in a Manner worthy of God, to the Divine Nature. The infinite Distance between God; and us; is P 4

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no Objection to our afcending even from the Confideration of our own moral Powers and Qualities, to a Conception and Acknowledgement of his moral Attributes; for if any of the moral Excellencies of our Minds, be real absolute Perfections, and of course worthy of the most excellent spiritual Natures, we may proceed, with great Certainty, to ascribe them, or fome Powers, answering to them, and which eminently and perfectly contain them, even to the original independent Mind, And why should it be faid, that there is an Absurdity, or Impropriety, in arguing from the moral Accomplishments of the human, to the moral Perfections of the Divine Nature? It is allowed by those, who have most strongly infifted upon this Impropriety, that we can form some Notions of the Power and Wildom of God, and that we have so much Evidence of the Truth of these Divine Attributes, as that we

may

may conclude, that God is an omnipotent, and an all-wife Being. But from whence do we originally derive our Ideas of Power and Wildom? Do we not receive them, chiefly from an Attention to our own Activity, and to that Sagacity which we have of profecuting the important Ends which we propose, by the most proper and effectual Means ? Now if we have Notions of Power and Wifdom in ourselves, and if upon the Foundation of these, we can form some Conceptions of the Almighty Power, and infinite Wildom of God, and reason ourfelves into a Belief of them; why may we not be allowed, from the Approbation and Love of Virtue, and the Difapprobation and Dislike of Vice, and from that Benevolence of Heart, which we find in ourselves, the Notions of which. are at least as clear and intelligible, as those of Power and Wisdom, to form fome Ideas of the confummate Holineis and

and Goodness of God; and to suppose, that these high Excellencies belong to him. in fome eminent; and absolutely perfect Manner? In doing thus, we are not furaly guilty of any Prefumption, as the very Constitution of our Nature directeth ue to this Way of Thinking and Residuing equeerning God; nor are chargeable with any Diffespect towards him, in reafoning analogically from our own highest and best Powers and Affections, to his original supreme Perfections : We may reason thus, and still allow, for the infinite Superiority of his Perfections, to all that can be called excellent in us, and be so far from dishonouring him, that on the contrary we shall really do him Honour, by rendering him an intelligible Being and representing him in an amiable Light; and thereby laying a Foundation, for paying a rational Homage, or Worship to him; as well as for deriving some Benefit to ourselves, from our Belief of his Exbus

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of the most noble and our crous Virtuet, As to the Objection which hath been Of the Obmade in all Ages to the Goodness of the Mixture of God, brought from the Mixture of Evil, in the World. both natural and moral, which is to be found in the World: The ancient Favourers of Atheism, triumphed greatly in this Objection; thinking, that by it, they could overturn the Belief of a Deity, and of a good and equal Providence. But whatever stress was formerly laid upon the Objection, it will not bear much now, among Men of any Knowledge and Reflection; who must be sensible, that the Evils, which are so much complained of, are only the Confequences of fuch a Constitution, as is most subservient, and even necessary to the general Order and Happiness of the Universe, and are attended with Advantages, which manifeftly overballance all the Inconveniencies of them; particularly, Agains

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particularly, as they give Scope and Opportunity for the Cultivation and Exercise of the most noble and generous Virtues, and for improving the Minds of Men to mort soiffer the discurrent a great Height of Perfection; for making them to appear in a most amiable Light, in the Character of good Angels, and as a fort of inferiour Divinities, by the Protection and Affistance, which they give to one another. But so much was fuggested before to this Purpose, in anfwering another Objection, as makes it unnecessary to add any Thing more upon the Objection, it will not be this Subject. among Men of ear Knowledge and Re-

The Objection to the difference between moral Good and Evil, not being founded in Nature, antwered before-

particularly,

The Objection to the Difference between moral Good and Evil, not being founded in Nature, but only in politive Institution, Custom, and Education, needeth not to be mentioned here; as it was clearly stated, and fully considered, and replied to before.

Against

Against revealed Religion in General, as diffinguished from the Religion of Religion in Nature, it is objected that it is a Thing of no Consequence, or Use, but rather the contrary; forasmuch as the original Powers of Nature can sufficiently instruct Men in every Branch of their Duty, with respect both to God, and their Neighbours; and forasmuch as the Additions which have been made to natural Religion and Morality, by most supposed Divine Revelations, have been absurd and foolish, or rather in many Instances at least, hurtful and pernicious. This Objection hath likewise been, in a great Measure, answered before, when previously to the producing the direct Proofs of the Truth of Christianity, the Utility, or Advantage of it, in improving and strengthening the Religion of Nature, even in the best Scheme of it, discoverable by Reason, and in adapting it to the universal Practice of the World, much

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more effectually, than it was adapted to it before, was explained, and clearly made out. So that it is only a rath and illgrounded Affumption, that no Scheme of revealed Religion, can be of any Importance or Use to Mankind. As to the alledged abfurd, or immoral Additions, which have been made to the System of Religion founded in Nature, by almost all pretended Divine Revelations; we need not give ourselves any Trouble, in inquiring particularly into thefe; as we are concerned only with the Additions, which have been made to the Religion and Law of Nature, by those Institutions, which on just Grounds, we acknowledge to be Divine; the Jewish, and the Christian. If any Thing, Foolish, or Superstitious, Immoral or Wicked, can be charged on these, their claim to a divine Original, must certainly be given up. But with respect to the latter, its Adversaries must do a great deal more, than with

with any Appearance of Realons they have hitherto been able to do before they can fix any thing abilirds or of any for of hurtful Tendency in upon any oblities poculiar genuine Doctrines, Precepts, and Rites. It hath been elterdy thewn, on the contrary, that all these are calculated to Support and reinforce the Religion of or Nature, and to carry the great! Delign of it in the most effectual manner, into Exeention. And with respect to the Jawish Religional if at this Distance, we could become acquainted with the Reasons of its feveral Laws and Institutions rites highly probable, athat they would appear to share been very properly appointed, and against imodated to the Circumstances of Thinks, in regard to Religion, and to the Condition of the People, to show they were preferiled. It is enough at prefers to flay, that no Man, can, with otresiting affirm, that any of the Jewish Lews and Carendmies, were not wilely prescribed; and that cit even

Objections the Jewith Religion in particular.

even as they now appear, many of them, are of a most useful Tendency, and that none of them can justly lie under the Imputation of being superstitious, or contradictory to the effential Laws of Nature. Rice. It hath been tillrold Morally or or

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Objections to the Jewish Religion in particular.

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Against the Jewish Religion, however, a great Clamour hath been raised and Torrents of Reproach have been poured upon the Author of it, for taking Advantage of the Ignorance of a low flupid People, to impose on them, such an illiberal, camal, and enflaving System; and for authorifing and requiring in his Law, things, that are inconfiftent even with the plainest Principles of natural lustice and Humanity of fuch as human Sacrifices, the putting of Men to Death for Idolatry, and the Excision of the Canaanitish Nations; besides that there are a great Number of Abfurdities and Falshoods dispersed in other Parts of his Writings, and in the

the other Books of the Old Teffament! which were subsequent to, and grafted upon his. Now to fet the Cafe of the Jewish Religion in a true Light, and to return a fair and candid Answer to the leveral Things contained in this Objection it must be observed, in the first Place, that the Jewish Institution was intended. not at all for a compleat and perfect Syftem of Religion, but rather to ferve forme particular Purpoles of great Importance, indeed, in the Scheme of Providence, as the World was circumstanced, at the Time when this Institution was fet on foot, and which were plainly worthy of being effected by a Divine Interpolition. One Purpose of this Sort, was the keeping up the Acknowledgement and Worthip of the one true God, the Creator of Heaven, and of Earth, and the lupreme Governour and Lord of all Things, among one People, when all other Nations were falling into an Ignorance, or Forgetfulnels of acquainted him,

him, and finking into the groffest Polytheifm and Idolatry. God indeed had thought fit, to make some Discoveries of himself and of his Will, over and above what he had taught them, by the Light of Nature, to particular Persons, among the Patriarchs, before the giving of the Law by Mofes, to guard and secure them against the growing Idolatry and Superfition of the Times. And that the Knowledge of himself, and of his true Worship, might be more securely and permanently preserved, he afterwards selected the Posterity of Abrabam, then grown into a great Nation, in regard of the eminent Piety and Integrity of their Anceftor, to be his peculiar People, and the Repositories of this Knowledge, and instituted a Religion among them, of which the Unity of God, and the worshipping of him alone, were the first and fundamental Principles. So that the Jewish Nation in general, must have been always acquainted mid.

acquainted with these Principles, even when many of them; upon feveral Occafions, contradicted them, or apostatised from them in their Practice; and may be confidered as a Light thining in Darkness, for the Instruction and Direction of the rest of Mankind; as exhibiting by their distinguishing Notions concerning the Deity, and their peculiar Form of Divine Worship, a standing Testimony against those Depravations and Corruptions of Religion, in some of it's primary and most capital Articles, which took Place every where around them, and which had a most pernicious Effect, on almost every Part of the moral Behaviour of Men. Another great purpose, which was to be served by the Jewish Institution, was the preparing of the Way, for introducing, at the due Season, a far better and more perfect Scheme of Religion, under the Administration of the Messach, which was to be the universal Religion of Mankind, and Q2

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to give them the greatest Helps and Advantages, that could juffly be defired by them, for attaining to the true Perfection and End of their Beingst Accordingly, we find, both in the Books of Mofes, and in those of the other facred Writers of the Old Tellament, various, clear, and expressi Predictions, updinting lour the Coming of the Melliah, and his fetting ho a spiritual Kingdom, for releasing the World, from the Power of Idolary, Superflition, and Vice, and for the Improvement of Men, in all that is excellent and praife-worthy; and likewife feveral Prefigurations, or Types, among the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law, of the great Bleffings of this new and glorious Dispensation. The Religion of the Law and the Prophets, is therefore, to be looked upon as an Introduction to a Scheme of the highest Importance to the World; as directly leading those, who were under Its Authority and Influence, to a Reception couniof of the Religion of the Melligh and as allording a long Broof of the Truth of this Redigions to all who object achew dradily quant from skable Prophed cies lofi the Old Westerner the and many of its nipipal Representations were fulfilled in Wefar Christ, and the Advantages which ed, that some of its political larissorous not so strict, as in the best State of a well--Band belides the laying these two great Purpoles the Jewith Institution, was to lay down Laws for directing the moral Conduct of the People, to whom it was given; and likewise for ordering their palicical and civil Affairs, and for regulating the feveral Parts of their religious Washin. The moral Laws; of its are the wery Laws of Nature and Reafon and could not have filled to have raised those, who obeyed their, in any Mediure according to the true Meaning and Estent of them . 1804 great fublimity in Kirtue . Regjudicial Constitutions, were in general, extremely well ni

well calculated, for promoting and establish blishing the Order and Happiness of the Nation; and have been greatly admired, by many of the ablest Masters of political Wildom, in all Ages, who have hadean Opportunity of being truly acquainted with them. It must, however, be owned, that some of its political Laws were not so strict, as in the best State of a wellordered Society, might have been expected; those of them particularly, which gave too great Licence, in the Affairs of Divorcel Polygamy, Concubinate, and Servitude. In these Matters, some Indulgencies were given to the Jews, for the Hardness of their Hearts, or in Condescension to their Prejudices and Weaknelles; as it might have had the Appearance of Harlhness and Severity to them, to have been laid under Restraints in Cases, where all their Neighbours took great Liberties; which might in the End, have drawn them to revolt from their own Religion, to Idolatry. And in

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in these Things, their Legislator could the more easily tolerate them, as there was no intrinfic Malignity, or immediate ino-Bvil in them, however inconfiftent they plainly are with the most wife and perfect Constitution of civil Society. The ritual Precepts given to the Jews, were indeed very numerous, and required forme Things of great exterior Porno and Solemnity; an unhappy Effect of which, was, that while their Imaginations were dazzled, and their Minds too much engroffed with the outward Splendor of their Worthip, their Attention was in a great Meafure, taken off from Matters of vaftly fuperior Worth and Importance It is plainly impossible, at this Diffance of Time, to account for the Inflittation of all that Variety of Rites and Ceremonies, which were prescribed to the Year. Some of them, from the very Name of the Things, frem plainly to have been defigued, though nothing is faid about it flitious in

in the Lave infelf, for Figures on Shadows of good Things to come; to give an Opportunity to Men, who could reflect and obferve at the proper Time that there was on Connexion between the Jawith and Christian Institutions that one of these referred to, and made Way for the other; that the Scheme for the Recovery of Mankind, from the State of Quilt and Corruption into which they had fallen of which we have the first Intimations in the Writings of Moses and which was more clearly opened by the following Prophets of the Old Teffament received it's Completion in the Difpensathon of the Mellich, and the Religion of the Coppet One Endingeneral of imi poling fuch a Multitude of politive Orde nancouspon the Jews, Iwas containly, the keeping them, ha Poople, diffinet and loparate from the rest of the World; which was very accellary to their being preferred from the idolatrous Worldip, and lopes. fitious -

thinious Unges of their Meighbouris But however tumerous and enrious, the Rives of the Jawille Institution Overcoand blowd eyer idifficult it mays believe account abimany of them will is no illication month fewenthat pathing polich lean julyite feld to albenien more ligits Ito be found and any of them stract indeed in any of the Laws and Stateles of this Religion. As for the Objections which have been made to the Jewish Religion, for lauthor rifing and commanding Things, plainly immoral repugnant to all the principles of natural Justice and Humanity, fuch as haman Sadrifices or the putting Idolaters, as fuel; to Death; and the Deletion of the Camaanitifo Nations of they will be found, upon Examination, to be of no Weight and the buly Presente for alleign ing, that human Sacrifices were autico rifed or countenanced by the Jewin Law. is an Passage of Leonical dy where it's thought to have been pegelfany, was va-; bil faid,

Of particular Objections to the Jewish Religion; and first of its requiring human Sacrifices.

Of particular Objections to the lewish Religion; and first of its re -ud gairiup man Sacrifi-

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faid, that none devoted, which fall be desisted of Men, shall be redressed, but shall furth be put to Death in A Pallage, by no Means fufficiently clear and explicit; to Support the Notion of human Sacrifices being allowed, or required by the Inflew tion of Mose: or It indeed feemsth to be very plain, that the Words do not refer to the putting Men to Death, in the Way of Cacrificing them, or to any other unnatural Death at all. A Man's being devotedy is the lame Thing, as appeareth from the Context, with his being boly anto the Lord and this denoted his being fanctified in a relative fenfe, or fet apart for the Service of God, in the Tabernacle. A Man, might in this Sense, have devoted himself, if he shought fit; and la Parenta in feveral Inflances, thus devoted his Child; which Act, if ratified by the Confent of the Child, at the proper Time, which, in all Reafon, must be thought to have been necessary, was va-

lid;

lid; and the Child could never afterwards be redeemed, but was to be the Lard's, in Perpetuity; was certainly to be an Atcarlant, for Servantalin the Tabernacle, or Temple, till bis going to Death's which Sense of the original Phrase, is justified or illustrated, as hath been observed by forme learned Man, by fome others parallel to it in Scripture. An Example clearly illustrating this Matter, we have in the Case of Samuel; whose Mother, having yowed him to the Lord, before he was born, brought him in Consequence of her yow, as foon as he was at all capable of it, to appear before the Lord, and there to abide for ever; to be the Lord's, as long as be lived Samuel agreeing to what his Mothey had done, was fully devoted; the Confequence of which was, that he was that he continued unredeemed, a confrant Servant of God, to the End of his aithful Subjects and Servants, by acknow-

Of the ordering Idolaters to be put to Death.

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Life, and at last died, in the devoted

Of the ordering Idolaters to be put to Death.

Perpetuity; was certainly to be an At-Another Immorality imputed to the fewire Infliction, is its ordering deter to be put to death for laciatry. This hand been represented, as an authoriting of Murder, and a Demonstration male and Addhor of hiel a Law, would niever be the Mellenger, of Milliary of Code Bal notwith flanding all the vellement Excla? mations, which have been made against mations, which have been made against this Law, what is there in it that cast be shocking, or in the least offensive to a Man, who is acquainted with the Confidential Man, while they continued to be his called the Man, while they continued to be his called Sphieds and Servants by acknowfaithful Subjects and Servants, by acknowledging

ledging and worthipping him alone, as the one true God : Whereas as foon as they apollatized to the Worthip of any other God, they became Rebels and Traistors; and not only forfeited all Claim to Favour, but tendered themselves obnexious to the feverest Punishment, which the supreme Power of Society could inflict on the most capital Offenders. The Law for putting Idolaters to Death, it must be observed, related only to the native Israelites, and to those Proselytes, who had obtained equal Privileges with them, and did not extend to any Foreigners, chargeable with Idolatry, who lived only occasionally among them. If any one will fay, that the Case hath not been fairly represented, let him make out the Truth of his Affertion; but till he doth for it is very evident, that all Cavils and Objections to this Part of the Jewish Polity, are wholly vain and groundless.

Predecessor Will it be faid, that it seems unworthy of God, to give a Command

Of the live fine fine fine fine fine of the Canadantes Nation ...

Of the Excifion of the Canaanitifh Nations. As little can be faid, for fixing a Charge of Immorality, on the Command given to the Ifraelites, for the Excision of the Canaanitifo Nations. These Nations had for a long Course of Time, been growing up to an enermous Height of Idolatry, and of the most shocking Wickedness. And when the Measure of their Iniquity was become full, God determined to inflict a most exemplary Punishment upon them, extending even to the Extirpation of every one of them, as a People, for a Warning and Terror to their Neighbours; and to employ the Ifraelites, who, by a Grant long before made to Abraham, were to succeed to the Inheritance of their Land, in the Execution of his Sentence upon them, for impressing both themselves, and their Posterity, with a deeper, and more lasting Horror of the Crimes, which had brought fuch a difmal Roin upon their Predecessors. Will it be said, that it was unworthy of God, to give a Command

mand to the Ifraclites, to extirpate the Canadite Nations, in fuch Circumstant ces; or that there was a Breach of any Law of Nature, in their complying with this Command? To answer in the Affirmative, would be to finike at a very high Point, the Right of the Supreme, univerfal, righteous Governor, to punish a guilty Reople, when he thought it fit to do to pland to punish them, in such a Manner, as he faw would be most conducive to the general Good of the World. It feemeth to be very clear, that the Deity, might, with the most holy, just, and beneficent Intention, have iffued fuch a Command. But, perhaps, it may be faid, that there was at least an Harthness, or Severity, even to the Israelites, in ordering them to be the Executioners of fuch a dreadful Sentence, upon whole Nations of their Fellow-Creatures; who with Respect to them were innocent, from whom at least they could not be faid

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faid to have received any operave Wrongs. Let it the acknowledged to the praise of our Creator, that the gea nervin human Heart, not perverted, but exercing infelf, waecording to the hatve Bent, is unterly welfe from every. Thing, that bath the appearance of Causing while it cannot confent to a fevere Panishment. however just and neoclary, without feely ing forme Uneafmels and Reluctance But still, if a Man of the motions paffionate Spirity came to be fully fertible, that the infliction of the very hear vieft Pains and Sufferings, on forme enormous Oriminals and Malefactors, was necessary for the Prevention of Evil, and for contributing to the Happinels of great Numbers; if he faw, that this was a Measure pointed out in the ordnary Course of Providence, and of God's Government of this World; and more especially, if he had an extraordinary Direction from God himfelf, to slutte it; bishes use entiry of Cod. to give

bis dworld mestginly if the acted as becardéshira, boercome his Rejuetance and Fendernofs, folder, has to content readily. libethinging which we ten Offendered to whe Dimillment which they fo justy defervi edesigNowanthibalwash really the Cale of the Resple of diracty with Respectito the Cambridith Distinst of They knew that ithes Nations hall, for a long Dirac been edgimiting theointife dabominable and Thomas Orines of which Igges the Go. warmer of this World; the fullette Right to doom themicrof Detruction they knews that he had actually devoted them to it, and that they proceeded, under the Smition of his Commission, in the Part which they acted against them, they likewife faw, buthat the Extirpation of them, might be of great wee, in the -Way of Brample and Admonition to the World about them; and they might shave different on particular Propriety, in making themselves the Instruments of -sxs. of them choleRit, might have remained

executing the divine Vengeance on their devoted People; as it tended naturally to give both them, and thefer who who is come after them; and who were toidwell in the Land, which had been polletied by the exterminated Inhabitants, a greater Dread of the fame, or of the like Sini and Offences, for which they had fuffered to to verely and remarkably. Alpon the electrical Confiderations, the Nation of Ifrach might, without any Imputation of the Want of Humanity, have executed the Command of Godgo for the Excision of reheb Car namite People; especially, whenwith farther confidered, that the beeverity, which they were to exercise against them, extended not, as it hath been dominionly supposed, to a general and entire Massacre of them; but only to a Deletion to Extinction of them, as Nations, Communities, or Bodies politicals For Whenever the Canaanites were reduced to the State of being no more a People, sichoever of them chose sit, might have remained mained in the Country, as Servants, and Tributaries to the Ifraelites, without Molecularities without Molecularities, which was thore, or lefs, the Cate, from the first Settlement of Ifraelitically in the Land of Canada, and particularly in the Reigh of Solomon, the Inoth Housilling Time of the Ifraelitic State and Government, sprint radio gniloquit and Government, and I in think that no

As for the remaining Things 6bjected wind Jewin Religion, the numerous Abilitides and Talinoous Tampened in other Parts of the Writings of Mojest and in the Bitter Acred Books open anone Tenament, which were hipplemental to, and graffed upon his. It would be an enddeni Week reven to enamerate there al tedget da Brantines white Militakes ? di Nor doth of recin to the of Introduce, and Chierran aparticular Confidential of chemi at manuabletve in general, that many of the Things, supported to be Abfurdities and Errors, in the Willings of bas Moses, R 2

Of the Abfurdities and Falfehood, alledged to be in the Writings of Mofes, and other Books of the Old Teftament. Of the Abfurdities and Falfehood, alledged to be in the Writings of Mofes, and other Books of the Old Tetlament. Moles, and of the other Prophets, are not fuch in themselves, but called so, from the Ignorance, and Misapprehensions of the Persons, who find Fault with them; from their interpreting Things literally, for Inflance, which are to be understood allegorically, or figuratively; from their supposing other Things to have happened in Fact, which in all Probability were done only in Vision; by judging of the Customs, Usages, and proverbial Sayings of ancient Times, from a Comparison of them with modern Fathions, Modes of living and Forms of Convertation in notwithflandig that in all Things of this Sort of great Divertity must pecelfarily happens in different Ages, and Situations of the World without any of them being liable to the Charge of Ridicule and Folly from Anaining Arong figurative Plarafes 1000 far, and putting an hards or filly Meaning upon them, when they are fairly capable of an easy and just one; May of then charge, with have and

and from depending too much on the common Translations of the facred Writings, which often present to us, very different Notions, from those, which the original Words convey. And here, to prevent our returning upon another Occafion, to the fame, or the like Subject, I shall take Notice, that the Observations which have been now made, may be used, for taking off a Charge of Absurdity and Falshood, which hath been advanced, with great Confidence, against several Passages in the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles, in the New Testament. But it is not improbable, that it will be faid, that the Inconfiftencies and Contradictions in the Writings of Moses, and of other reputed sacred Authors, are fo gross and glaring, that there is no Possibility of upravelling them; that the Mistakes, contained in these Writings, as to Names, Perfons, Numbers, Times, and Places, are fo palpa-

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ble and frequent, that they are never by any Pains of Critics, and Reconcilers, to be fet right. Perhaps the Persons, who are loudest in urging Difficulties of this Sort, may not know, how far the Labours of the Learned, both among Jews, and Christians, have gone, in explaining and reconciling Things, alledged to be quite inexplicable, and irreconcileable; and in clearing up many of the pretended Mistakes, as to Names, Numbers, and fuch like Circumstances. But the Truth is, we need not much trouble ourselves, about Objections of this Kind. Let the worst that can be said with Respect to them, be supposed to be the Cale; that there are Repugnancies and Mistakes, at present, in the sacred Writings, which can by no Art, or Wit of Man, be cleared up, or removed. Is it at all wonderful, that the same Injuries should have happened to the most ancient Books in the World, I mean those of ble

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Moles, and some others in the Old Testament, and which may be supposed to have undergone the greatest Number of Transcriptions and Publications, that have been incident to Writings of much more recent Date, through the Unfkilfulness, and Carelessies and in some Cafe, through the evil Dispositions of Men But what is the Confequence of this I Is the Truth of Religion, in the leaft hereby affected? Or, must we to defend it maintain at the fame Time, the Infallibility and Impeccability of all the Copiers, and Publishers of the Bible? Or, if we should go farther, and suppole, that in the original Writings of the facred Penmen themselves, fome small Mistakes might have been inserted, through Inattention, or from the Want of better Information. 18 I do inot fay, that this, in any Instance, was ever the Case, but would even this Supposition, be of any bandful Confequence to Reliunder R 4 gion?

gion ? Is it necessary for its Security, to affert the absolute universal Inspiration of the facred Writers, in all Things, that we find in their Books? This Notion, however agreeable to modern vulger To nets about Inspiration; was not the Doctrine of the ancient Jews oner hath been the Opinion of their most learned Doctors of later Ages non was it received by many of the learned Fathers of the Church, nor held by the most judicious and able Christian Writers of the last. and of the preferst Age. will is evident that the holy Writers themselves dever made a Claim to fuch Sort of Infoira tion inner indeed was it at all nebellary, that they should have had it and a great Part of what they have idelivered to its, might have been faid on well dishout any Infpiration at all, as with its the furely, snough, on the fablish other Touts and Divine Authority Idio Religion, and supposes that the factor Rehman, lover R 4 gion? under

entites fuch a general Guidance and Direction of the holy Spirit, that they could not at any Time, deliver any Notions, which would have had a permicious Effect upon Religion; which would either have made Men to mistake the Nature of it. or which would have weakned, or deftroyed the Evidences of R; and that in all Cases, which were many, where a supernatural infattible Infoiration was necessaty, they had it; of which, we have fill forme incontestable Marks and Monuments remaining in their Writings. And particularly in relation to Mofes, it is fufficient to affeit, that he was in a most extraordinary Manner, instructed and directed by God, in the Frame and Promulgation of his Rollgion and Law; and that he was under the fullest and most immediate Impiration of the holy Spirit, in the Prophecies which he uttered concerning the Maffab, and the different Fates of his own People, according as they adhered to the

the Worship of the one true God, or departed from it. Of the truth of this, the Miracles which he wrought, and his Prophecies already fulfilled, and fill fulfulling before our Eyes, will not suffer us to have any doubt: though at the fame time, it is evident, that he had not the Affistance of a supernatural Inspiration, or Instruction, in all his Transactions; as is plain, from that important Institution of Judges, for the Trial of civil Causes, soon after the beginning of their Peregrination in the Wilderness, in which he proceeded folely on the Advice of a wife Man, and the Principles of human Prudence. in horanden in manut vienib

And now from this general Review, which we have taken of the Jewith Religion, I think there can be no Reason for vilifying the Character of Moses, or for accusing, or suspecting him, of any

ewal Reople, according as they adhered to

low, felfish Design, in his Conduct to- No Reason for wards the Ifraelitish Nation: On the contrary, he seemeth to be highly worthy of being revered, and admired, as a Lawgiver of confummate Wildom and Ability, who gave an Institution to his People, not indeed absolutely perfect in itself, but the best, which their Circumstances, and the Situation of Things in the World, would bear; as a most generous, difinterested, and heroic Spirit, whose ruling Passion was the Love of his Countrymen and Brethren, to the establishing the Profperity of whom, upon a folid Foundation, he was ever ready to facrifice his Eafe, and Health, and Life; who never once thought of aggrandifing himself, or his Family to the Prejudice of the Publick; and who at last, left his Posterity, to enjoy only a Share of the Advantages, which they could have in common with the rest of the Tribe, to which they belonged. This furely, is a respectable Character, bas Lord Polingbroke in his Polinemous Well and

vilifying the Character of and entitled to some Degree of Veneration to reformed) and Honour. Who then, possessed of the least Ingenuity and Generolity of Heart, can reflect, without Indignation, on the Slanders and Reproaches, which have been fo profusely thrown upon him by fome late Labourers in the Field of Infidelity; particularly by one * who hath diffinguished himself, by Abuses of this Kind; who, among many other Instances of his Outrage, hath told us, that he could not think of Moses, without feeling a Contempt of him, as a Philosopher, and a Horror of him, as a Divine! Words proceeding only from Presumption and Ignorance, and not from any clear Discernment and true Judgment. But we may the more eafily bear with this Abuse of Moles, from him; as it was the Manner of the Man, to attack and afperfe all the most eminent and illustrious Persons, both

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of Antiquity, and of later Times, who chose to proceed in the Tract of Nature, in forming their Opinions on the Subjects of Morality and Religion; and who in Consequence of this, were led into Sentiments, different from those, which have been broached by this mighty Philosopher, and Theologer; who, therefore, resolved to be revenged on them, by expoling them, as Fools and Visionaries; and to establish his own Notions, as the Standard of good Senfe, and just Reasoning, on all the Paints of the first Philosophy, by which he meant the fundamental Principles of Religion; and good Morals; however crude and indigested, and weak in their Foundation, his Notions are and however plainly exertive they are notwithstanding the awkward and inconfiftent Presences, which he frequently maketh to the contrary, of the Principles of all found Philosophy, and of true Reis long, to explain and illustrate a 1992il

To

An Objection against Christianity, that we have no Standard of it.

To go on to an Examination of some other Objections against Religion: Against Christianity at large, it is objected, that we bave no Standard of it; as the Text, upon which it is founded, bath not that Authenticity, Clearness, and Precision, which are necessary to establish it, a divine, and a certain Rule of Faith and Practice. This is the wonderful Discovery of the bold Champion against Religion, just before referred to; who, it must be owned, if he should at any. Time appear to be defective in Penetration and Argument, is by no means to in the Dogmaticalness and Affurance of his Affertions. Strange indeed it is, to be in Effect told, that all the Labours of the most fentible, judicious, and learned Men, who have treated of Christianity, have been quite thrown away; that they have only and fed themselves, and the World, idly and unprofitably, while they have endeavoured fo long, to explain and illustrate a Thing. that

that is altogether unititelligible, and and definable. But fuchule the Felicity of a great Geniup as to be able at one Glance! to lee through the Dunges and Reveries, which shave ofor Ages poffelled and iconfounded the Minds of the grossiand in refined Partibf Mankindan But mightoit not have been expected, that a Mannof a tente Abute and comprehensive Genius. whiled have thought ofto have igone followhat deeper than our Objector bath gine, in fearthing for the true Idea, and in fixing the proper Standard of a Religion, to be professed and practised by all Mankind & Must not such a Man have feen, that the primary Notion, or Standard of an universal Religion, is not to be fought for in any Codes, or written Sylterns whatloever, which from the very Nature of Things, must, in regard to the different Nations of Men, be liable to fome Ambiguity, or Uncertainty; whit in fomething antecedent, and Superior to them: distr

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them min forme leriginal Sentiments; cods genial with the human Mind, stemmen to all Men invariable simple and of sely Comprehenion And as the hirs Notice of Religion in general, las side fifting in the Practice of Moral Picty and Virtue, under the British and Acknowledgement of a supreme! Governor and Judge is a Sentiment, and comprehensive of all other Sentiments of this fort, it is to be substituted, as the Founda tion, upon which every Religion intended for the common? Use of the World is to be built, and to be made the Tell. or Standard, for trying all the particular Doctrines, Notions, and Institutions of that Religion; and indeed for judging of the Truth of every Religion whiteforwer, pretending to be Divine. To this Test, the patriarchal Religion, which was not much more than the Religion of Nature, plainly agreed: To this Teft, the Religion of Mofes and the Prophets, in the main them s

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main like with ragiced in And to the famer Standard athe Redigion of Affins Christ, is past profestly hadmonious mas the Pracy the bitment Nature ; under the Belief of the imeral Covernment of Godinand an Shapertation of sa ofuture State, is reprefented every where in it, with great Clear, And Precisions and Certainty lass Mate migieflithe nutmaft Confequence ; has the Mereflityand this is det in a great Variety of bights by it a street as it is, indeed, the Tilling for shot Reinforcement of which Allerthe Desines, Institutions, Motives, and Affifiances of this Religion, are ultimately intended. It is impossible, therefore that any Man, who is acquainted with the Nature of Religion in general, and the Progress which it can rationally make among Men, can ever be at a Lofe for the Standard of Test of Christianity as this is to be brought from the funiverfal Religion of Nature, in which, as every true Religion must be, the Religion of that the

the Gospel is evidently founded, and the Plan of which it adopteth, and improveth. and carrieth to the unnoft Perfect tion. To fay then, that Christianity hath no Standard, because the Authenticity or Canonicalness of fome of the Books of the New Testament, hath been so may be disputed, and because some Pasfages of them, are of a doubtful Signification, is every poor Realoning . After making greater Concessions to the Adverfaries of the Gospel, with respect to these Facts, than are at all necessary to be made to them, still there will remain enough of the Text of the New Testaments of fuch an undoubted Authenticity and Authority, and of fo clear, and determinate a Meaning, as to fatisfy all Men of Understanding and Candour, that the Religion of the Colpel, coincideth with the original and universal Religion of Manwkind, and that the Standard of the one. is likewife the Standard of the other; Siliz that that Christianity is plainly, grafted upon the religious and moral System of Nature, and the highest Improvement of its self of its and the bighest Improvement of its self of its and the bighest Improvement of its self of its and the bighest Improvement of its self of its and the bighest and the bighe

an But now from Whence another Objection to Christianity will arise that/as it is only an Improvement of the religious and moral System of Nature, it can be but of small Value, and but little deserving the Attention of Mankind : And accordingly, it hath been urged, with an -Intention to overthrow Christianity, that it is at old as the Creation; and that the Goffel is only a Republication of the Law of Nature But now let the full Truth in this Case be declared that Christianity hath its Foundation in those Sentiments, which are connatural with the human Mind or which unavoidably fpring up in it, in the proper Exercise of it's Faculties, and that it setteth all those Sentiments in the clearest and brightest Light; that S 2

An Objection to Christianity, from its being only a Republication of the Law of Nature. An Objection to Christianuty, from its being only a being only a Republication of the Law of Nature.

that it is not a bare Repetition of the Principles of the natural Law, but a Rrictly divine Republication of this Law; a Republication of it, in the Name, or by the Authority of God, fufficiently madeknown to the World, by the Signs, or Miracles, which accompanied the Promulgation of the Gofpel, with fome Infinitions Motives, and Affiftances, of great Importance, for obeying the Law of our Nature, beyond what the Conflitution of Nature affords, but perfectly according with our natural Sentiments and Principles: Let this, I fay be confidered to be the Cafe of Christianity, as in Truth it is, and it is to far from being any Difhonour or Diminution of it than it is really the great Glory and Strength of it, and ferties it upon a Foundation don which it will remain inamoveable against the most powerful Opposition of its Encties, and that, it fetteth all those simispecific in the clearest and brightest hight; that 5 2

There are some other Objections, which have been raised against Christianity, on account of its not being univerfally known; and because the Evidence of it, is not irrefiftible; and because it hath not a sufficient Efficacy, for producing an univerfal Reformation of Manners, among those, who profess to believe it. These Objections have been thought by fome, to be very material; but in Truth, they have but very little Weight in them. They proceed upon the Supposition, that we are competent Judges of all the Circumstances with which a divine Revelation should be granted to Mankind; and in urging them, we argue from our own Prejudices and Prefumptions, to what ought to have been the Conduct of infinite Wifdom. Whereas the natural and becoming Inquiry to us, is, whether Christianity be really a divine Revelation? And if we have Reason to think that it is so, our Bufiness then, is not, to turn any eidr Dif-S 3

Of other Objections against Christianity.

Difficulties, arising from some Circumstances attending it, into positive Objecti tions against it, but to consider, whether they may not be reconciled with the Supposition of its being a truly divine Institution? And if we do this, we shall foon find, that the Difficulties abovementioned, will not at all affect the Truth and divine Authority of the Gospel. Christianity, it is said, is not universally known: But doth it follow from hence, that it cannot be a most precious Gift of God to Men? Doth not the whole Analogy of the divine Conduct, with respect to the different Nations of Men, and to Individuals, declare the contrary? Indeed as Mankind in general, before the Introduction of Christianity, were in a most deplorable State of Ignorance and Corruption, from which, they could be effectually delivered, as it seemeth to be most probable, only by fuch a Revelation; it might have been expected, that when this

this Revelation was given, it would have been contrived and calculated for that it might have easily come to be the univerfal Religion of Mankind; and have been readily communicated to all Nations. Accordingly, we find that Christianity is an Institution of this Nature, fitted to be univerfally received by Men; and that in Fact, it was most amazingly propagated, in some Time after the Promulgation of it, not only through all Parts of the Roman Empire, then in its most extended State; but to the most distant Countries of the Earth: Perhaps, as widely, as the State of the World at that Time, would permit it to be. It was left afterwards to be supported, and to be propagated still farther, by such Methods, as the Wisdom and Prudence of Men, should judge to be most expedient for these Purposes, and which their Piety, Benevolence, and Zeal in a good Work, would prompt them to use for effec-S 4 MERCY

effecting them. If they, however, have been negligent and careless in the Matter; and if in Confequence of their Defects, the Knowledge of Christianity is now, in all great Measure, lost in Count tries, where it once flourished, and it remaineth quite unknown to many Nations, fince that Time discovered; Providence is no more to be blamed for these, than for any other unfortunate Events, which are owing purely to our Neglects and Miscarriages. It is enough, that Men have it always in their Power, whenever they fet about it in Barnest, to diffuse the Knowledge of the Gospel, still more extensively, even till it becometh the universal Religion of the World. Nor is the Circumstance of its not being known to every Individual, or even to every Nation, a Reason, why we should not believe it to be of a divine Original; as God is not obliged to grant the fame, or equal Measures of his Fa-

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your, in all Cases, to all Men; as there is indeed a great Inequality in the Dil tribution of his Gifts, in many of his most important Dispensations towards Men ; and as fome excellent Ends, are answered by this Inequality, which could not be ferved upon another Scheme. It is farther faid; that the Evidence of Christianity is not irrefiltible. But can this be ever turned into a reasonable Objection to the Truth and Credibility of it? Is it not enough, that the Evidence on which it standeth, is abundantly fufficient, for aga fording a Conviction of its Truth, to all Persons of attentive, teachable, and honest Minds, who carefully and fairly inquire into ity and examine it? Would it have become the divine Wildom, to have made the Proofs of the Gospel, so Arik ing and fo strong, that they must have extend Conviction from all Men, to whom they were at all proposed, even from the most negligent, obstinate, and bleadt in-

infincere? Must not such a Measure have quite destroyed the Merit of our believing; and frustrated, in a most material Instance, the Intention of God, in endowing us with intellectual and rational Faculties? And whereas it is still farther fuggested, in the Way of an Objection to Christianity, that it hath not a sufficient Force, for producing an universal Reformation in those, who profess to believe it : Surely, the proper Question here is, Whether it be not apparently calculated to produce fuch a Reformation? And if in the whole Frame and Contexture of it, it is really a Doctrine according to Godliness, having the plainest, the most direct, and immediate Tendency to an universally pure and good Life; and if it is impossible that any Persons, who cordially embrace it, and give themselves up entirely to its Influence, should not be thoroughly purified from all moral Depravity and Corruption, and that they fhould -fil

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should not become remarkable for all good Qualities, which is evidently the Truth: what more in this Respect, could be expected from any religious Inftitution? If the Men, who profess to believe the Gospel, are not determined by its Principles and Motives, to forfake their Sins, and to lead a Life of all Piety and Righteoutness, they are not, certainly, entitled to any superior Advantages, if they could obtain them, for enabling them to do fo: But greater Advantages for this Purpose, they could not, perhaps, have, confiftently with the Order of their Nature, and with leaving Room for Virtue's being the Effect of their own Choice. All Infinuations, therefore, against Christianity, for its Infofficiency to reform the Manners of Men, are altogether impertinent and pear to be the Case, by many of disy

But some Objections have been urged, against some of the peculiar Doctrines of the

most able Waters upon this Subject. And

Of Objections against some of the peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel; first, against the Doctrine of the Trinity.

the Gospel: as first, against the Doctrine of the bleffed Trinity; which hath been represented as incomprehensible Jargon, or at best as an idle and unprofitable Speculation, which may perplex, or amuse the Mind, but which can never instruct, or improve it, in any Thing, that is at all valuable. The abfurd Explanations which have been formetimes given of this Doctrine, have given Rife to this Objection: But the Doctrine itself, as it is laid down in the New Testament, is liable to no fuch Imputations. It was not indeed to be discovered by any Reason of Men; but as it is revealed, and delivered to us, and fo far as it is to be the Object of our Faith, there is nothing in it, either unintelligible, or in the least offensive to Reason; which hath often been made appear to be the Case, by many of the most able Writers upon this Subject. And it is so far from being a barren and useless Speculation, that it serveth the most imimportant practical Purposes; not only as it discovereth to us, the Relations in which we stand to the three glorious divine Persons, who are principally concerned in the Occonomy of our Redemption and Salvation, and pointeth out to us, the Duties, which we owe respectively to thema but as it suggesteth and exhibiteth to us, some of the most noble and interesting Considerations, for exciting and engaging us, to the Exercise of all Virtue. Coincle containing the glad Tidings of Sal-

The Doctrine of our Saviour's Mediafion and Interceffion for rus, hathi been likewife objected too as repagnant to our natural Ideas of God, and unworthy of the Dignity and Hosour of this Government. And indeed forme Explanations have been given of this Doctrine, which will not comport with any just Notions of the Perfections of God, and with the Honour of his Government : But then these Explanations will us little agree dirides of Forgivenels, and of everlaiting -qsH

The Doctrine of our Saviour's Mediation and Intercession for us, objected

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with the Truth of the Scripture Declarations upon this Head. As this is a Matter of very confiderable Moment, which yet feemeth to be greatly mifan-

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derstood by many, I shall, as briefly, as Jucan, endeavour to explain it, and to fet it, in a true and unexceptionable Light. The Case was this God did not think fit, when Mankind, by their wilful Sins, had become liable to his Condemnation, to give them when he promulgated the Gospel, containing the glad Tidings of Salvation to all People, any explicit Promises of Forgivenels, merely upon their Repentance; though, it is certain, that this must always have been thought by rational Men, the necessary Condition of their obtaining Pardon, and it might have been hoped by them, when their Repentance was fincere, that it always would have entitled them to some Degree of

had determined to grant them the Promiles of Forgiveness, and of everlasting

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The Doftrine of our Saviour's Mediation and Intercellion for us, objected

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Happines, supon Conditions becoming the Punty and Goodness of his Nature. in Confequence of which Interpolition of one who by a Course of the most ext traordinary and confurmate Virtue, Thould render himself words, to obtain to high The Performance The Performance whole Mediation and Intercession in the half of Men, God felowed to grane the Terms of Poigwents, and of Salvaden, now published in the Golpel, was his Sort of whomite was forefold befole his Incamation, that the was ricolning out the World, to do the Win of his Patter, in the most perfect and acceptable Manher, even to factifice his Life, in Compliance with it mand hereby to effablish for Men, a Covenant of Reconciliation with God, much more effectually, than the Sacrifices and Offerings, which they had made Use of for that Purpole, Could do. Var Accordingly, when the Son of God appeared in the World, he performed a Part in it, so eminent and con-

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spicuous for allissions before that white whi faid of another Person Dakenwich there in Contengened driving and necklashadams pricty he applied soubline qui golfringente bad Rower with God in and previled The Acriptures niedced, were woften males his Merit to confire chiefly in his Obedience unto Death even the Death of the Sirafer because this pros the finishing rand most fignal Act of this Relignation to the Will of his Fathers But it is mutain what whatever be acted, or fuffered amecedent ly to that in Profession of the exsellent Defign in Which he was engaged. made Past of that Ment which explied him to the A Prince and a Soviews : sar which God thought him watthy of heing admitted a Mediator in Behalf of the guilty and degenerate Race of Men, and by his Interceffion to obtain for them, the Promises of Forgiveness and of syerlafting, Happiness; and to have the Conduct of the whole Affair of their SalnoiteMed a Part in it, to eminent and con-

vation committed to him ! In Confequence of which, we find, that God bath bigbly exalted bim, and given bim a Name, above every Name; hath vested him with all Power in Heaven and in Earth; hath fet him at the Head of that glorious Kingdom, erected under the Dispensation of the Golpel, in which he is to exercife the Authority of God himself, and to reign, till be bath brought all Enemies under bis Feet, to declare and fix the Terms of our Forgiveness and Acceptance, to prescribe the Law, or Rule of our Duty, to protect and affift his faithful Servants in this World; and finally to give them eternal Lafe, in the next. offered in the deflering met ellestriantly

In all this, there is, furely, nothing, from whence it can be inferred, that the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort, was not, from the effential Goodness of his own Nature, always inclined to all Acts of Compassion and Fa-

your or that God, who, from his inherent Purity, necessarily doth whatever is in itself right, and becoming him, could ever be brought by the Application of another, to alter his Measures, or to purfue a better Conduct, than that, which he purfued before: For this whole Scheme of offering us Forgivenes and Salvation, through the Mediation of Chrift, found ed on the Merit of his Incarnation, Obedience, Sufferings, and Death, was in Truth the Contrivance of God himfelf; and in executing it, he hath acted in perfect Confiftency with, or trather hath most remarkably and effectually carried on the great Delign of his moral Administration; by difplaying most illustriously bis Regard to Virtue, on moral Goodness; and the Prevalence of it, among rational Agents. For as moral Goodness, is the great Foundation of the Glory and Happinels of God himfelf, according to any rational Conceptions, which we can form of VOUL :

ofuthern, folifie likewifolthe Riundaion? of the Dignity and Hippine (sufi VIbine foriorintellisens d'atutes Dillemukothete? forethe hall hingy of the highest Estitias tion and Price with Gold; faind the home ing Men to partake of it lin the highest Degreed in which they are chipable of its single He supposed to be the ultimater Ini tention of his whole Administration ton wards them Accordingly, we find that both in the Constitution of Nature, and in the whole Plan of the Gofpel, he bath given us a most lively Sense of the inconsparable Worth of morah Parity, not Goodness and the greatest Advantages for the Acquisition of its Now this high Regards which the Deity; the Pountain of all Purity and Excellence meediarily emertaineth for the Buitty, Virene, sor marate Goodness of radional Agents, he hath most eminently exemplified in the Cafeinow before us, imprenting through the Mediation and Interceffion of our T 2 have Saviour. Saviour, vin Confequence of his confume mate Virtue, the Terrisoof Pardon land Salvation, published in the Gospel, to the guilty Race of Men, who had anteced dently, no first Claim or Title to themit and inevelting him with fufficient Power; blegtechtiw wildenday odw ellasignist to Terms to a Participation of the Happin ness, annexed to their doing its. lo Byithis Conduct) the great Father of the Univ verse, hath most remarkably before the whole trational Creation | Expressed this Approbation of the perfect Virtue of his Son, vand I given the greatest Encourage, ment to fall intelligent moral Beingsoto adhere inviolably to the Cause of Virtue which he for eminently patronizeth and in adhering to which, they may, from the Example of Our Savious affuredly expect to be railed to a high Degree of Favour with God, vand a State of the greatest Dignity and Relicityd While at the fame Time they must necessarily have Saviour,

have a Horror of incurring the least Degreerof Guilt, for the Abolition of which, fuch a wonderful Interposition, was, in the Counsels of God, found to be ex-

and impossible; nor yet, merely in the

in Nor is there any Thing, in the Account which hath been given of this Dispensation, which can be faid to be unnatural, or altogether remote from what happeneth, according to the fettled Order and Course of Things, and under the common Administration of Providence in the World. It is plain, that God bath fo contrived Things, and his doing for bath been justly accounted a great Instance of his Goodness, that intelligent Beings shall profit of the Abilities and Virtues of those, who are raised above them, in Rank and Perfection. We see that the natural Powers, and even the external Advantages of some, turn greatly, in feveral Respects, to the T 3 Benefon

Benefit of others whire is it hard to conceive, "that their Amoralo Wature Thould redound so their Adodan likewife; anot in the Way of an Imputation politheir Virtues to them, which is quite about and impossible; nor yet, merely in the Way of Example, or of allining to imitation; but as their Virtues defocially when in Conjunction with superior Will dom and Understanding, must give their Policilors a Merit with thole; on whom, the Welfare of the Persons, who want their Affiltance, may confiderably det pend; and to chable them to procure to thefe Dependants, Favours, for which, perhaps, they themselves, could, swith no Propriety, immediately apply. Indeed the Application of Perfons of high and diffinguished Worth, in Behalf of the less defervings is universally allowed, to be a just Foundation for granting Favours in feveral Cafes, which, without fuch Application, there would be no Real Benefon

fon for conferring; and is a Thing, which is every Day practifed with Success, in the World. It is unavoidable, that Men, in whom there is any Ingenuity of Heart, must have great Regard to fuch an Interpolition, from the Refpect and Homage, which they naturally pay to eminent Virtue. And if we look into the Accounts which are given us of the Conduct of God, in other Cases, belides the great one, of offering us Forgiveness and Salvation through the Mediation of his most worthy and well beloved Son we shall find that he hath honoured the extraordinary Virtue of good Men, by bestowing for their Sake, and at their Request, Bleffings upon Persons, who had no prior Title, or Right to them. Thus the eminent Faith and Obedience of Abraham, are represented as the Ground of God's conferring peculiar Privileges and Advantages on his Pofferity, though not in themselves more worthy T 4

worthy than the other Nations of Men. The Zeal, and Prayers, of Mofes, Phineas, and of some other good Men, are likewise mentioned, as the Means of averting the Displeasure of God from the offending Ifraelites, and of re-inflating them in his Favour. The Prayers of Job, are also spoken of, as having an Influence in obtaining Pardon for his Friends: And St. Paul was affured by the Angel, who appeared to him, that God bad given bim the Lives of all who failed with bim, when in the utmost Danger of perishing; and the same Apostle trufted, that he should be delivered from his Imprisonment, and other Troubles, through the Prayers of his worthy believing Friends. And indeed, is it not plain, that the Efficacy of interceffory Prayer in general with God, must be presupposed, in order to our engaging rationally in it, if there be any farther Meaning in it, than the improving us in

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a Temper of Good-will and Humanity? Now if God, in the Constitution of Nature, hath so ordered Matters, that a high Respect must be always paid to the Intercession of eminently good Men, in behalf of those, who are less worthy, if a Petition, or Request from such, is in itself a just Ground for granting Favours to others, in feveral Instances, which otherwife would not be granted to them; can it be thought to be out of Nature, and inconfistent with the usual Dispensations of Providence; or is it not rather analogous to, or of a piece, with what we observe to be the Course of Nature in this World, that God should have the greatest Regard to the Interposition of so excellent a Person as our Saviour, in Favour of the human Race? If he hath often vouchfafed to honour fome eminent Acts of Virtue in Men, who were yet far from being Perfect, fo much as merely on that Account, to grant certain De-

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gries of his Favour, to those for whose Interest they were follicitous of there is deafon to think, that he ftill hath a Regard to the Prayers and Intercessions of his faithful Servants in this World, in the Distributions of his Mercy and Grace; is it at all furprizing, or is it not rather, what we might naturally have expected, that he would have the highest Esteem, of the most consummate Merit, that was lever exhibited on the Theatre of the Uniweife, and grant to the Mediation of him, who possessed this Merit, great as the Favour is, Terms of Grace and Salvation to the whole guilty World, who could not plead any previous Right, or Title to them? It cannot, therefore, be pretended by any, who acknowledge the Wildom and Goodness of God, in the natural Constitution, and ordinary Government of the World, that there is any Thing unnatural, or fantaflick, in suppofing him, from a Regard to the eminent 29979 Virtue,

Vintue, or high moral Worth of our Lord, to grant us the Promises of Forgiveness, and of Salvation: This being only to empress in an higher Instance, that same segard to the Virtue of moral Agents, which he hath expressed, and doth still express, in many Cases of lower Consideration; and which, according to the Principles which he hath implanted in our Nature, we are under a Necessity of expressing likerwise in our Conduct towards one another *.

different Meanings, according to the New Laftly, The Doctrine of the New Testament, concerning the Duration of the lear-

It is not necessary to proceed farther in this Argument; as enough has been said, to shew, that the Doctrine of our Saviour's Mediation and Intercession, or of his procuring for us, the Terms of Porgivers and Salvation, which are offered in the Gospel, may be very intelligibly and rationally explained and vindicated. I shall only add, that the several Phrases, which occur in the sacred Writings, of our Lord's being the Propitiation for our Sino, his making winements.

An Objection to the Doctrime of the Golpel, concerning the Daration of the figure Paoillement. An Objection to the Doctrine of the Gospel, concerning the Duration of the future Punishment. the future Punishments hath been greatly objected via as carrying severity and crudes in its and being quite irreconcile able to the Juffice, Placability and Goodnes of God. This Objection, hath by filme, teen very much aggravated; but indeed with very little Reason. It is well known, that the Words, eternal, ever-Talling, and the like, which denote the Dillation of the future Punishment of the Wicked, have no precise and determinate Signification; but are of very different Meanings, according to the Nafure of the Subjects, or Things, of which they are affirmed. And as it is at the fame Time, certain, both from the clearflat is not nevel try to proceed further in this Argu-

for them, and passing them areas by the Sacrifice of himleft, and the like, are fairly capable of an Interpretation, intirely agreeable to the Explanation, which hath been given of this Doctrine, as much be sufficiently known to many of the Learned, But an Inquiry into the Import of the warious Phrases, relating to this Subject, would be too large a Discussion for this Place. est Principles of Reasony and from the uniform Declarations of Scriptdre, that God is a berfedtly holy, righteous, and good Being; must we not conclude sithat the Punishment threatned in these Phrases, of a doubtful, or an indeterminate Meaning, however awful and terrible it will certainly be, yet will not to the Judgment of any impartial Mind, appear to be too fevere, or rigorous, in point either of Intenseness, or Duration; that it will indeed, be no other Punishment, than what the Purposes of the wisest and most righteous Government require; and which goodness itself, must prompt and determine the Deity to inflict: Now as the Phraseology of the Scriptures, with refpect to the Nature and Duration of the future Punishment of the obstinately Wicked, will, undoubtedly admit of an Explanation, which is perfectly confistent with our natural Notions of the Wisdom, Equity, Mercy, and Goodness of the fupreme

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fupreme Governor of the World, it is plain, that no Objection founded upon it, can ever turn to the Prejudice of the Christian Revolation w fram ; guisd boog the Punishment threatned in these Phrae les, of a doubtful, or an indeterminant Meaning, however awful and terrible it will certainly be yet will not to the ludgment of any impartial Mind, appear to be too fevere, or rigorous, in point either of Intendences, or Duration; that it will indeed, be no other Punishment, than what the Parpoles of the wilest and most politeous Covernment require, and which goodnets idelf, mill prompt and dotermine the Deity to inflict: Noty as the Phrafeology of the Scriptures, with refied to the Nature and Duration of the future Fundhment on the obligately ns to fimbe vibodichan diwPlaRT Explanation, which is perfectly confiltant with our natural Notlons of the Wildom, Equity, Morey, and Coolings of the Same di

furnacia and confidence in the Performaance of our Duty , to infoire us, with

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which we can attain to in this World, Of the Excellence, and Importance of true Goodnets, of whoolglass Nature is at all

capable; and upon the whole, to raile TAVING confidered the Nature of true Religion, and the Foundations. upon which it standeth wit will not now be improper, for giving us a greater Ed teem and Relish of it, to make some few Reflections upon it's Excellence, and Imthe Influence of which, when sanstrog fubrait ourfelves to it, we thall certainly

The Excellence of a practical Infitua Of the Exceltion in respect to us, consisteth in it's ligion. Efficacy, to endow us, with all lovely and worthy Qualities; to purify our Nature; to ftrengthen and enlarge our fuperior Faculties; to confer on us, a maginanimity, or greatness of Mind, with a Firmness

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firmness and consistency in the Performance of our Duty; to inspire us, with fuch an Ardour in Virtue, as will make us to aspire to the highest Perfection, which we can attain to in this World. and indeed to the greatest Sublimity in Goodness, of which our Nature is at all capable; and upon the whole, to raife us to a most honourable Station, to a noble and eminent Rank in the rational and moral Creation Thele were the boafted Effects of Philosophy in ancient Times: But they are still more really and eminently the Effects of Religion; the Influence of which, when we freely submit ourselves to it, we shall certainly find, to be most strong and powerful for thefe Purpofeston, au of flooden ni noit

Religion plainly defigns to raife and improve in us, all amiable and good Dispositions and Affections; of the Excellence and Worth of which, we have

Efficacy, to endow us, with all lovely

a Motion variginally, and indelibly vimpressed usion jour Minds. The Seeds and Principles Disall Virtue, were indeed in fuled into our Hearts olat like Time of our Creation; abut las thefee for the Want of Cultivation for the most opartitle dormant, in a gleat Measure brin the Mind, till Religion taketh Blace in it; whenever this cometh in, lit communit catoth a genial and vital Warmth to them, reviveth and quickneth them, chesisteth and invigorateth them, and maketh them to produce in us, all the lovely Fruits of Piety, Righteouther, Good! nels, and Temperance. Religion, in the whole Scheme of it in general, in all its Doctrines, Laws, Institutions, Affiftances, Motives, and Examples, is intended and dalculated, for engaging us to the Cultore and Exercise of all the Virtues, of the highest Dignity and Merit, and for making us, to abound, and to excell in them; for purging out of our Nature, finit every every bafel reodrupt, vand glow Principle, and for begetting thous fuch a Purity of Affection; and fuch a divine Temperiof Mind, as will telofely unite oor affix us to the Deity and make ds toodelight in nothing dofmuch rias in doing his boly just, and parfect Wille Religion partis cularly intendeth to ropin Arefine baild Arengthen all our highers Powers of purify and illuminate our Understandings by diffipating those Fumes and Mists of Paffion, which would cloud and objetie them; and by giving them calmitand fleady, clear and comprehensive Views of the most noble Objects T To give a peculiar Delicacy to our Senie of Good and Evil; to render it so lively, acuts and prompt, that we shall very easily approve, and adhere to the Things, which are excellent, and detest and avoid the Contrary : To enliven and accelerate the Operations of our generous Affections, and to add a great Force to them, in the Pur-CARLA fuit

fuit of their respective Ends, or Objects. In thort, the Principles of Religion, fully imbibed and digested by us, will bestow on us, a Largeness of Soul, an Elevation and Grandeur of Spirit, which will raile us far above all the evil Attractives, or the Temptations of this World; which will make to go through the necessary Business of it, and to partake of the innocent Enjoyments of it, without being at all infected, or hurt by it; and to bear with a manly Patience and Relignation, all the Calamities and Evils of it; which will make us chiefly intent on discharging our Duty, and to proceed with the most free and lively Motions, in an uniform, confilten Courle of all pious, honeit, generous, and benevolent Deeds; to dwell much on the Ideas of inward Beauty, Harmony, and Decency, of orderly and becoming Affections, of Worth and Dignity of Character, and to be growing up every Day, to all that height of Perfection, tion. U 2 which

which is attainable by us, in this Life: And which carrying us beyond this prefent Scene, will make us to confider what Improvements we may be capable of in a future State; and to fettle our Attention frequently on the Perfection of Beauty and Goodness in the supreme Mind, and to contemplate with Pleasure, the Activity and Zeal, the Freedom and Vigour, with which the bleffed Ministers of his Will, the holy Angels, obey and execute his Commands; and by this Means, to prepare ourselves for mixing at last, in the general Affembly of pure and perfect Spirits, for joining in their most noble and laudable Employments, and for partaking for ever of their Divine Digand benevolent Deeds; to well me

This is the Course, which Religion always taketh in those, who embrace it, with true Judgment and Affection, and give themselves up entirely to its Direction,

tion. And to what a noble Sublimity doth it exalt the Men, who are wifely governed, and strongly animated by its Spirit? How amiable is their Appearance! and what a glorious Figure do they make! How vastly preferable are they, to all who are reputed the mightieff and greatest upon Earth, who having nothing of that inward folid Worth, which they possess, are only puffed up by the Swellings of their own Pride, and upheld in their vain Conceits, by the Applaules of ignorant, fawning, and fervile Men! The Persons uniformly and powerfully actuated by the Principles of Religion, must, certainly, be the Darlings of all the wife and generoully minded of their own Specles, in this World; and must indeed exhibit a Spectacle, worthy to be beheld, with Admiration and Delight, by the feveral Orders of higher Intelligences in the ordinary Appearances in the Conduct. of

Men,

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This Eminence in Virtue, is the certain Effect of Religion, whenever it exerteth its intire Influence on the Minds of Men; and it is an Effect peculiar to Re-For though in History, we meet ligion. with Examples of the admirable Power of Philosophy, in ennobling the Spirits, and exalting the Characters of some great Men of Antiquity; yet, the Philosophy, which produced these Effects, is not to to be confidered as a Principle different from Religion: For it is, in Truth, the Ground-Work of every rational Scheme of Religion; a Thing, which blends and mixes itself in almost every Part of Religion; and which pursueth the same End, which Religion hath in View, though it cannot promote this End to effectually, nor in so large an Extent, as Religion doth. And though the auftere Zeal of Superstition, and the impetuous Sallies of Enthulialm, often give rile to fuch extraordinary Appearances in the Conduct of

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Men,

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Men, as procure them an high Reputatation for Sanctity, and even for an heroical Virtue, from inattentive and injudicious Minds; vet, whoever can judge cruly of the Behaviour of the Persons, actuated by these Principles, may always fee fomething in it, either fo groveling, for low, and unmanly, or for wild and extravagant, and fo much beyond all the Bounds of Nature, as must ever prevent it's being an Object of high Efteem with them, even when some Things very plaufible, or really good, may be found in it. The Principles of Religion alone, pure and genuine, as dictated to us by Nature, and Supported and strengthned by the Doctrine of the Gospel, can throughly purify the Hearts and Manners of Men, give the truest Dignity and an unvaried Luftre to their Conduct, and the highest Finishing to their Characters; and, in a Word, shew human Nature in the most levely and honourable Light, in which tue; U 4

which it can be need one fortality, and even fertilation

ical Victor, from institutive and guadi-

Of the Importance of Religion.

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And as the Excellence of Religion is thus great, the Importance of it, is not less. The Importance of it, must indeed appear in a very strong Light, from what hath been just now said. For as moral Excellence, the Foundation of our highest Dignity, must necessarily be the Object of the first and strongest Defire of every well disciplined Mind, the Tendency of Religion, to endow us with this, sheweth it to be a Thing of the utmost Consequence to us. And that it is so, appeareth still more clearly and fully, from it's Tendency to confer on us, the most perfect Happiness. The Defire of Happiness, every one findeth to be a most strong inextinguishable Principle in his Nature: Now Religion effectually provideth for the Gratification of this Defire, by endowing us with Virtue, or moral Goodness; which, as it is the Foundation of our highest Dignity, fo it is likewise the Cause, or Spring of our trued Happiness. Whoever is well acquainted with the Happiness of human Nature, must be fensible that the greatest and most valuable Part of it, in Comparison of which, all other Things that are called pleafant and good, are as nothing, proceedeth from the Possession of Virtue, in an eminent Degree; that from this, and from those Expectations, which naturally flow from it, and accompany it, we receive Pleasures, which are, above all others, pure and fatisfying; fixed and constant, which are ever at hand, to alleviate the ordinary Afflictions of Life, and to support us under our greatest Distresses; and which are so effential an Ingredient in all Happiness, that if we were quite deprived of them, our other Enjoyments could have no Relish, but would soon grow

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joyless and insipid. So abundant and profule is the Goodness of our Creator; that he poureth Pleasure into our Minds, from various Sources, and by different Channels and Conveyances; the external Senses; and many inward Powers of Perception: And among the various Pleafures, of which we partake, that which we receive from the Consciousness of our Integrity, or of a fincerely and uniformly good Frame of Heart, must be allowed by all, who have ever experienced it, to be by far, the most felicitating, or the most replete with true Happiness. This Consciousness gives us a Sense of our possessing an intrinsick solid Dignity and Merit, and of being in a State, the most becoming and honourable to rational Agents; and in Consequence of this, yields us a Joy, which most intimately penetrates and affects us, and makes us to delight in our own Perfections: It produces withal, such a confident Opinion, + 70i

nion, or Hope, in us, of our Acceptableness to other intelligent and moral Beings, and particularly to the great Author of our Nature, and Arbiter of our Fate, (whom we must conclude, from the very Powers, which he hath implanted in us, to have the same Kind of Sentiments, though infinitely more perfect, which we ourselves have of the Worth of Virtue, as fills us, with a Security and Peace, which is never to be fully expressed, and is best understood, by its being perceived and felt. And as the Pleasures derived from this Source, are thus fincere and fatisfactory, fo they are likewise most permanent and durable; not depending upon any external Objects, the Continuance of which must be always uncertain, but flowing directly from the Review and Approbation of our own Temper; never cloying, or furfeiting, but rather whetting and encreafing our Appetites and Defires of them;

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not flattening by Familiarity, and long Acquaintance with them; but growing always more agreeable and grateful, the more they are experienced and proved. Besides, these Pleasures have another great Advantage, that they have Strength enough in them, not only to relieve us, under the common Troubles and Afflictions of the World, but to support us, under the severest Distresses and Calamities, which A Man, who is percan here befal us. feetly calm and easy within, who, upon clear and folid Grounds, is at Peace with himself, and hath a Confidence in his Maker, Governor, and Judge, will be but little moved with those Evils, which are incident to every one, in the Course of this frail uncertain Life: These common unfortunate Accidents, which are apt to give much Vexation and Pain to many Persons, who keep their Minds under no Discipline; and who, having but little, or no Enjoyment in their own Breafts, Breafts, are forced to depend on Things without them, for their Happiness, are hardly felt by the Man, who exerteth his Defires, and exercifeth his Paffions, in a natural and just Order, and hath always a Spring of the highest Delight, in the very Exercise of his Affections, and in his Reflections upon his own Conduct: Nay, if such a Man should fall under the most extraordinary and grievous Calamities, which can happen to Mankind; the furprizing Loss of Friends, the total Ruin of the Public, the unexpected Destruction of his private Affairs, the most cruel Persecutions, lingering Difeases, and tormenting Pains of Body; he would not, even in the Depth of all this Distress and Misery, be quite overwhelmed and funk, which must necessarily be the Case of a bad Man, in the fame, or a like Situation; but by looking into himself, would still perceive Light arifing in Darkness; would feel great Quiet--eqel

Quietness and Assurance of Soul, in the Midst of the violent Storms, which outwardly encompassed and threatned him: He might indeed, formetimes, from the very Nature of his Distress, be made altogether incapable of Reflection; but whenever he could recollect himself, and exert his Powers, he would, in the worst Condition, to which he could be reduced, be always able to relish his Exiltence, and to lift up his Eyes to the Author of his Being, and the Disposer of his Lot, with Thankfulness and Hope; and in the very Agonies of Death, would commit his Soul, with the firmest Trust into his Hands, and rejoice with a foy, unipeakable, and full of Glory. In fine, as these Pleasures are most lively and durable in themselves, and of the greatest Use to relieve and support us, under our Diffresses, so they are at the same Time, the Life of all our other Enjoyments, which, if they were quite detached and Quietsepe-

seperated from them rould yield but na very thiall Share of Happines ... For what Enjoyment could the Man have, who had the greatest Abundance of the Means of sensitive Good, and butio even indurged bimielf in all fentual Delights, as far as his Nature rould bear thehi rand like monting the Pleastres! the greatist what is rejuted the Elegance and Oranu deur bil life, but who was entirely delo titute of the Pleafures pootconfcious Vital tue; who tiad not any Sense of antilly ternal Worth, or nof la Merit and Cha facter beither dwith God, vor bwith the World b Would not every one, who knows the i Capacities, or Powers of Perception and Enjoyment, which belong to himman iv Nature of think wither State of fuch is Man, in the Midd of all his out ward Clare and Pomp, to be but meany and low, and absolutely wretched; espel cially, if he had the actual Confeious nels and Feeling of lan inward Baseness Ilow and

and Depravity, rendering him oflious to himself, and suspicions of all other way tional Beings; and particularly of him from whom, moteris to be hoped, bod feared by Mankind, than from all others whatfoever & The Confcioustics of Guilt in an intense Degree is certainly enoughs to destroy all the Comfort of the greatest worldly Prosperity, To-make all the Face of Nature licken to a Man, and Dife its felf in Time to grow a Burthen to him: With one, who is at tolerable Eafe and Quiet within hanfelf the innocent Enjoyments and Advantages of the World will always have their due Talte and Relishi but to a Man, whose Spirit in fick and wounded, nothing external can be much, or long pleafing. Upon the whole therefore, the vast Importance of our living under a deep, steady, constant Sense of the Principles of Religion, must be clear and evident; fince upon this, the greatest, or rather the only Happiness in Life, as well bms

well as our leaving this World, with Peace and Hope, and our taking Possession of the most compleat and perfect Happiness of the next, entirely depend.

TON O'A Account, which listh tion the or Religion, the west emily a divisions states of a top age in 1888, to have first a flactor Founds-Tim in Lattice and Reston, and to Le of List harder Could pronce to the layering Disnity and Happiness of the human, "Manura," that "villocrein entertain "thefe Southenens of its and feel the Power of the included of the ching and the coning eliefe own Spirits, must from the Geneand Henry bare of their Hearts. the undoubtedly deficers, that all Men, sto felori Pellett alls cremon Bloots and Prodice of it. It is indeed to be -imilati bas took X and becomthe Gift of God to Ment thould be to words neglected and undervilued by thems, as it commonly is; that the greatf)a

well as our leaving this World awill

CONCLUSION:

Happinels of the next, courely depond-

ROM the Account, which hath been given of Religion, it appeareth to be so amiable and divine a Thing in itself, to have such a strong Foundation in Nature and Reason, and to be of fuch mighty Confequence to the fupreme Dignity and Happiness of the human Nature, that whoever entertain these Sentiments of it, and feel the Power of it, in ennobling, elevating, and fweetning their own Spirits, must from the Generosity and Benevolence of their Hearts, be undoubtedly defirous, that all Men, should come to the Belief, Profession. and Practice of it. It is indeed to be - lamented, that this great and ineftimable Gift of God to Men, should be so much neglected and undervalued by them, as it commonly is; that the great-

eft Part of them, are fo unconcerned and indifferent about it that they take Pains, to racquire any rational No-Hoose of the Nature and Groundshof it. and are atter Strangers to the true Genius and Spirit of it; and that many appear to be full of Doubts about the Truth of it, or openly avow their Difbelief of it, especially of revealed Religion, the Claim of which to a divine Original, they look upon as the merest Fiction and Delufion. It is not at all improbable, that as Extremes are apt to beget one another, the Excelles of Superstition and Enthufialm, into which, Men have fometimes violently run, have, in fome Measure, made Way for that Temper of Coldness and Indifference, and that Spirit of Scepticism and Insidelity, which now so unhappily prevail with respect to Religion. But by whatfoever Means, this hath come to be the Case, it should be the Business, as it is plainly the Duty of all, who have who. the X 2

the proper Talents and Advantages for its to endeavour, both to cure Men of their Indifferency as to Religion; and to do liver them from a State of Suspence about the Truth of it, and much more from an actual Difbelief of its Authority. These may, indeed, be difficult Attempts in many Instances: A good deal, however, might probably be done in the first Case, by the discreet Pains of the stated Ministers of Religion, and of other wife and good Men, in representing in a just Light, to Persons of any Docility and Candour of Mind, the Reasonableness, Excellence, and Importance of Religion, and in fixing their Attention feriously upon it. The Difficulty of overcoming the Prejudices of those, who have been accustomed to doubt of the Truth of Religion, or, who reject its Authority, will be greater, or less, according to the Degree of their Scepticism, or Incredulity. If they are Scepticks, or Infidels of the worst Class, who. X 2

who, not contented with throwing off all Belief of fupernatural Revelation intend to subvert the fundamental Principles even of natural Religion; who helitate about the Existence and Perfections of God, or plainly deny them; who deride the Notions of moral Good and Evil, the Doctrine of God's moral Government, and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; if any are tainted with thefe extremely bad Principles, and especially if they have formed their Conduct in Life, according to their Theory, which very probably is the Cafe, there can be but very little Hope of an Alteration of Sentiments in them for the better: They feem to be under a Necessity of being Infidels in their own Defence; and having feated themselves in the Chair of the Scornful, are got above all Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof. But many, who are feeptical, or incredulous, as to feveral Points of Religion, are not for going nary X 3

Of those, who admit the Principles of natural Religrou, but doubt of, or deny the Truth deny the Cospel of the Cospel

Of those, who admit the Principles of natural Religion, but doubt of, or deny the Truth of the Gospel.

going into fuch any Extreme: 10f the Truthiof any extraordinary, or Supernatural Revelation, wthey have indeed no Notion; but they lipeak in Terms of Respect and Honour of all the main Principles vof natural Religion, and of good Morals They readily admit the Existence, and the several Attributes of God, and contemplate with Pleasure, the Beauty and Order of the Universe, from whence the Evidences of thefe, arife; they acknowledge the Doctrine of an universal Providence, and of God's Government over Men; they clearly discern the Reality and Difference of moral Good, and Evil; Right, and Wrong; and the natural Obligation which Men are under, to adhere to the one, and to avoid the other; and they think the Notion of a future State of Bewards and Punitments, not to be improbable, or ill foundced. Some who have expressed great Doubts of the Truth of any extraordigoing nary

nary Revelation, have thus done Honour to the Principles of natural Religion, by acknowledging freely their Conviction of the Truth of them; by illuftrating them, with great Beauty and Elegance; and by confirming most of them at least, with an irrefishible Force and Strength of Argument. It is to be wished, that all, who doubt of the Truth of the Gospel Revelation, or, who are any Way prejudiced against it, were of this Temper, and that they would be true to the Principles, which they profess to hold, and purfue them into all their just Confequences . If they would do fo, it might be expected that they would foon become Believers of Christianity, upon a rational and folid Foundation I For if the Man, who is well acquainted with the Principles of natural Religion, and is fully convinced of their Truth and Importance, compareth them with the Principles of the Gospel, he must soon see, that X 4 which

that they are co-incident, or in Effect the fame; but that the Gospel hath explained and illustrated them, confirmed and established them, and accommodated them to the general Use and Practice of the World, much more effectually than they were before : And if he approveth of the wife and excellent Scheme, which he fees is begun, and Ikerched out in the Conflictation of Nature, for improving Men in those Qualities, which are of the greatest Consequence to them, he mult, surely, will much more approve of the fame Scheme, as it is supported and improved in the Religion of the Gospet. Must he not, indeed, have great Pleature, in finding that the religious System of Nature, is lo clearly adopted, and fo powerfully reinforced, by the Religion of Christianity; and that this is the very Institution, suppoing the Pretentions of our Saviour to a divine Million, to be well supported, that which

which the wifest of the ancient Heathens. fo greatly defired? And must not he himself defire above all Things, to see the Claim of this Religion to a divine Original, fully established and made out? Of a Man, in this Situation of Mind, who hath a true and affectionate Senie of the Principles and Obligations of hatural Religion, and a just Notion of the Delign and Tendency of the Inflitution of Christ, and is well disposed towards it, it may very well be affirmed, that be is not far from the Kingdom of God . He is already a Man of Probity and Goodness, and, as it may be hoped, will foon become a fincere Disciple of our Lord. By builte natural Operation of those Fruths and Principles, slor which he is convinced, He will be linduced to enquire, candidly and diligently, into our Saviours Character land Pretentions; and in Confequence of this, sain hardly fail to acquietce make formly, Belief

Belief of his divine Authority. Or after all, if a Man, in a Christian Country of Liberty, and in an Age of Knowledge and Inquiry, who admitteth and receiveth the Doctrines of natural Religion, and hath a Zeal for their Support and Propagation, should reject the Gospel; or doubt of its Truth, it may, furely, be questioned, and should be well considered by the Man himself, whether in doing so, he acteth consistently and innocently? Whether his Incredulity, or Scepticism, with regard to Christianity, be reconcileable with a due Zeal for those Principles, which he professeth to believe, and acknowledgeth to be of Importance for the good Conduct of Life, fince the Doctrines of the Gospel are plainly founded upon these Principles, and are a great Improvement of them, and feem indeed to be wanted for giving them their full Force and Efficacy, for governing uniformly, Tolles the States and the west the

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formly, the Practice of the greatest Part of Mankind? It should be considered by him, whether his Hesitation in admitting the Truth and divine Authority of the Gospel, be really owing to a Want of Evidence, to fatisfy him as to these Points; or whether the Objections, which have been made to the Gospel, are sufficient to fet aside the clear, direct, and positive Evidences of its divine Authority? Whether he may not, upon a little Reflection, fee, that these Objections hardly at all affect any Thing effential to the Religion of Christ, and that they do not strike, or but weakly, at any material Part of the Evidence, which supporteth it; but that they are either drawn from fome miftaken Notions of Christianity, or levelled at some difficult Passages in the historical Parts of Scripture, which, however ex- add ad 10 plained have no necessary Connexion of warsvall with what is properly the Religion of the He

lievers who supernatural Revelation, Gofpel, -nird edt tud ciples of na-

tural Religion.

Gospel, which is in itself, a clear intelligible Scheme, and of easy Comprehenfion to an attentive, honest Mind; or elfe depend upon Principles, which are very precarious, and have no folid Foundation : and which if true, would lead us to reject not only the Golpel, but many of the Articles of natural Religion itself? And, therefore, in the last Place, whether his doubtfulnels, or infidelity as to Christianity, may not proceed from fome latent Prejudices; or at least, from Indolence and Inattention, and a Neglect of Inquiring and Examining; which alone, in a Matter of fuch high Moment must have fomething greatly blameable in them, and may be attended with very unhappy Confequences? at forme difficult Paffagesen

Of the Unbelievers who reject not only supernatural Revelation, but the Principles of natural Religion.

As for the other Sort of Unbelievers, who are quite extravagant and licentious in their Notions; who not only reject all

all supernatural Revelation, but throw off all the Principles of natural Religion, and of a true Morality, and treat them with Contempt and Scorn: Though it may be very hard to fuggest any Thing in the Way of Argument, that will make an Impression upon these; yet, as they are really Objects of great Compassion in themselves, and as their Conduct may be of dangerous Consequence to others; if the reclaiming of them be at all poffible, Humanity requireth, that it should be attempted. And there is certainly, a Foundation laid, for recovering them from their Delufions, in those excellent Powers, which were originally bestowed upon them, which, however weakned and impaired, however dead and buried they may feem to be in them, yet can never be utterly extinguished, or extirpated from their Constitution. Let some due Pains, be therefore taken, to awaken and them:

the place of the state of

and arrouse their intellectual and moral Faculties, and to give them a just impreffion of the Dignity and Importance of these Faculties, and of the ftrict Obligations, which they are under to exercise and improve them for the great Ends, for which they were given; the acquiring a Knowledge of the Deity, and of the Duty, which they owe immediately to him; together with a Sense of the Baseness and Ingratitude, with which they are chargeable, whenever they neglect to make the proper Use of them, and profitute them to any unworthy Purpoles: Particularly, let the Objects of their moral Approbation, or Diflike, be presented to their Minds, and held before them, in such a clear, strong, and fleady Light, that they must unavoidably discern them, and become senfible, both of the Reality of these Objects; and of an unalterable Difference between and the same bas them :

them: If this can be effected, it will foon introduce many other just and important Sentiments, into their Minds, Let it also be observed to them, that their common Practice of running down Religion, by Misrepresentations, and merely confident Affertions, by infipid Banter, fcornful Contempt, or petulant Raillery, without staying or caring for an Answer, is altogether unmanly, and far from being innocent. Let it be farther suggested to them, that the Opinions, which they are so fond of, must, in all Probability, appear upon Inquiry, to be ill founded; as they are so very contrary to all the Appearances of Nature: and supposing that there was even fome Presumption of the Truth of them, that they are so unprofitable and uncomfortable, or rather fo pernicious and malignant, that a wife Man, instead of being zealous in the Defence of them, would rather be glad to be undeceived

undeceived in any Notion which he had of the Truth of them, and to get them, upon a just Foundation, entirely banished from his Mind, And let it be urged upon them, in the last Place, that it is impossible to them, to have any Certainty, or clear Proof of the Falshood of the Principles of Religion: that the boldest Infidel, never could, or can bring a Demonstration against the Existence of a Deity, a Providence, and a future State; and that the very Possibility of the Truth of these Principles, lays a very strong Obligation upon Men, to attend feriously and candidly, to the Evidences offered in Support of them; and renders all deliberate malicious Opposition to them, and - all Irreverence, Scurrility and Blaiphemy, in regard to them utterly inexcuparmicious and malignant, that a wifelian,

inflead of being zealous in the Defence , would rather be glad to be

undeceived

Laftly, as to those, who admit and What the believe all the Principles both of natural those should Religion, and of Christianity: Let them in their Endeavours, to support and recommend Religion be uniform and confiftent, and take care not to pull down what they had before built up. Let them not, in order to ferve the Cause of Christianity, depreciate the natural State of Men, or represent them, as univerfully and totally blind and impotent, as to all, that is fpiritually and morally good, anteco dently to their Acquaintance with Revelation : Let them not contend for supernatural Revelation, as a Thing, that was absolutely, and in all Cases, wanted, to give Men any rational Notions of Religion, to fix and afcertain the Rule of Life to them, and to engage them to the Observance of it. Some, sindeed, oin these Methods, have endeavoured to promote the Interest; and to raise the Credit Y

be, who believe the Principles both of natural Religion, and of Christianity.

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of the Christian Revelation; but whatever good Intention they might have had in their Endeavours, the Success of them. could not be great among wife and understanding Men. For upon what Foundation, would the Belief of the Gospel fland, when no Principles and Rules were left to us, whereby we could examine, and judge of the Truth of it? Every Revelation, which would approve itself to the Reason of Men, must have some solid Ground to reft on, a Connexion with fome evident and certain Principles Jacknowledged, and admitted, previously to the Revelation itself. Such a Connexion the Gospel hath, with the Principles of Religion and Morality, discovered by the Light of Nature; as it is plainly founded in these Principles, and is a great Reinforcement and Improvement of them. The Way, therefore, to fettle Religion upon a rational Footing, lies very plain before

fore us; to support equally the Principles! of natural Religion, and those of Christianity: First, to explain, illustrate, and confirm the former, to shew the full Extent of them, and their Sufficiency, when well improved, for directing the moral Conduct of Men; and to take notice, at the same Time, where, through the Inadvertence, the Neglects, and the Diforders of Mankind, they usually fail to produce their proper Effect, in the greatest Part of them: And afterwards to point out the Correspondence of the Institution of our Saviour, with the Principles flowing from the Constitution of Nature, and to prove that it greatly supporteth and confirmeth these Principles, and indeed carrieth the excellent Scheme, which is founded in Nature, to it's full Perfection; and that it doeth all this, under the explicit Sanction of the highest Authority, that of God himfelf, fufficiently declared, and made nally, Y 2 known

known to the World, by many Arguments; particularly, by Signs, and Miracles, the Truth of which, cannot justly, be either denied, or contested. Let the Persons, who propose to defend, and to recommend Religion, fuccessfully, be farther admonished, to mix nothing of Wrath, Bitterness, and Arrogance, in the Arguments which they use for its Support; to offer the Reasons of their Faith and Hope, with Meekness and Respects fulness to those to whom they address themselves: to treat their Adversaries always with Equity and Candour, to abstain from all reproachful Censures of them for their Infidelity, and all harsh Judgments about their future Condition; and to endeavour only with the Words of Truth and Soberness, with a calm, gentle, and benevolent Spirit, to convince them of their Errors, and to bring them to a fincere Belief and Profession of the Gospel. Finally, gyrond

nally, Let all, who profess to believe Christianity, and to have a Zeal for its Establishment and Success, to all the other Arguments in its Favour, add that, which arifeth from an univerfally pure and righteous Conversation. When Men observe the Efficacy of the Institution of our Saviour, in refining and fanctifying the Hearts of those, who truly and affectionately submit to it, in raising them above all the common Corruptions of the World, and in making them eminent for all excellent Qualities, they cannot but be struck with the lovely Appearance, and if they have any Ingenuity, must have a very favourable Impression of the Religion, which giveth Rife to it: Whereas a Conversation contradictory to the Principles of Piety and Virtue, when found among those, who pretend to believe the Gospel, must ever be a Stumbling Block in the Way of Unbelievers; tempting them boxil.

them to look upon the Religion of Jefus, either as a Fable, or at best as a Thing of no Value, or Confideration. And this is a Matter, which the Believers of Christianity should have a Regard to, not only for the Honour and Interest of their Religion, but from a Concern for their own Safety and Happiness. For, if notwithstanding the clear Instructions, which the Gospel hath given them as to their Duty, and the powerful Obligations, which it hath laid upon them, to adhere to it, they will allow themselves in any kind of Vice, or Wickedness, they shall be plainly the most guilty and inexcusable of all Men: To whom, the Words, which the Divine Author of our Religion used to the Pharifees, who acted a Part, notoriously inconsistent with the Religion and Law, by which they professed to be governed, may be most justly and emphatically applied; If ye were blind, if ye lived

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lived in a State of Ignorance and Darkness, ye should have no Sing but now ye fay, we fee; but as you own, that you perceive and understand your Duty, therefore your Sin remaineth, and the be seed 111 Rector of Maybenge, is the Dictole of Logistic. Second

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